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Seeking the Face Behind the Face:
Rosenzweig and Nietzsche Opening to the Feminine Divine

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of the University of Denver and
the Iliff School of Theology Joint PhD Program

University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Sharon Mar Adams

June 2011

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Title: Seeking the Face Behind the Face: Rosenzweig and Nietzsche Opening to the Feminine Divine
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ABSTRACT

This study begins with a reading of Franz Rosenzweig's *Star of Redemption* and Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in a manner that offers evidence for what I call a feminine divine. In reading the *Star* against *Zarathustra* I explore how even as Rosenzweig appears to praise Nietzsche as being emblematic of Rosenzweig's "new thinking," Rosenzweig eventually finds Nietzsche falls short, (or, in other words, Rosenzweig critiques Nietzsche in suggesting his pagan roots prevent him from ever reaching Revelation). I suggest Nietzsche's texts do indicate a type of divine inspiration, but it is one coming not from the Father God of male monotheism, but of a Mother God held latent in history and western philosophy. It is through this very defense of Nietzsche against Rosenzweig that I begin to articulate a hidden feminine divine.

Through close readings of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* along with passages from *Ecce Homo* and *Will to Power* I defend Nietzsche against Rosenzweig's critique. I also refer to a text held latent in both the *Star* and *Zarathustra*, Goethe's *Faust*. It is through a reading of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* as it embodies notions of a feminine divine in Goethe's *Faust* that I offer a more complex approach to a feminine divinity.

Just as I suggest the key to my defense of Nietzsche consists in my recovering in his writings of a "divine feminine," I also assert the significance in another major writer who was a contemporary of Nietzsche and Rosenzweig: Lou Andreas-Salomé. Known by some as the "mother of psychoanalysis," Andreas-Salomé offers much in a

development of a feminine divine originating in Rosenzweig's and Nietzsche's texts and continuing on to writings of French psychoanalytic philosophers Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and Hélène Cixous. In short, I lay the groundwork for developing a feminist philosophy of religion from Rosenzweig's and Nietzsche's texts following through Andreas-Salomè's writing, using theorists in the French psychoanalytic tradition to move forward toward a contemporary feminist philosophy of religion that includes a feminine divine. I conclude by suggesting some practical applications of this feminist philosophy of religion that may be useful within the realm of inter-religious dialog as well as in feminist philosophy in general.

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Chapter One:
Seeking the Face Behind the Face

I cannot think of any need in childhood as strong as the need for a father's protection. Thus the part played by the oceanic feeling, which might seek something like the restoration of limitless narcissism, is ousted from a place in the foreground There may be something further behind that, but for the present it is wrapped in obscurity.

Sigmund Freud¹

There is no other way to express the Truth. Only when we see the Star as countenance, do we transcend every possibility and simply see.

Franz Rosenzweig²

Night has come: now my craving breaks out of me like a well; to speak I crave.

*Night has come; now all fountains speak more loudly.
And my soul, too, is a fountain.*

*Night has come; now all the songs of lovers awaken. And
my soul, too, is the song of a lover.*

Thus sang Zarathustra

Friedrich Nietzsche³

The good Lord is such a good Lord with such a good Mother too

Ben Harper⁴

¹ Sigmund Freud. *Civilization and Its Discontents*. In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. trans. James Strachey. Vol XXI. (London: The Hogarth Press, 1973), 172. In reference to this passage in her essay "Freud's Prehistoric Matrix—Owing 'Nature' a Death," Joan Raphael-Leff notes that Freud wrote it three months before his mother's death. See Joan Raphael-Leff, "Freud's Prehistoric Matrix—Owing 'Nature' a Death." *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 88, no. 6 (2007).

² Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans. William W. Hallo (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985).

³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, tans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking Press, 1966), 107.

⁴ Ben Harper. "When She Believes," *Diamonds on the Inside*, Virgin Records, 2003, CD.

Poetry is just the evidence of life. If your life is burning well, poetry is just the ash.

Leonard Cohen⁵

The history of philosophy of religion in the west does not include a feminine divine. There is no fully fleshed out depiction of a feminine divine as an integral aspect of western conceptions of divinity, even within the context of feminist philosophy. In this dissertation I look back to philosophical texts from the late eighteenth and earlier twentieth century in Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and Franz Rosenzweig's *Star of Redemption* respectively in order to explore what I call a *veiled* feminine divine. In my initial reading of these two texts I begin to unveil the "face behind the face" as an approach to a feminine divine that I suggest can only most fully come to the fore through additional insights and writings by Freud, Lou Andreas-Salomé and contemporary French feminist psychoanalytical theorists.

What makes my return to the thinking of Nietzsche and Rosenzweig unique is that I do not trace the philosophical lineage of either thinker, which has certainly already been done before. Instead, I attempt to make two moves that have not been made before, at least not in the sustained, conjoint, and focused way that I want to make them. Those two moves are: 1) to read their two greatest texts together; 2) to bring in the contemporary and alternative philosophical perspectives and voices of certain French feminist philosophers. Concerning the second of these two moves, I provide interpretations of an aspect of Rosenzweig's and Nietzsche's philosophical discourses that has not received

⁵ Leonard Cohen. Great-Quotes.com, Gledhill Enterprises, 2011.
<http://www.great-quotes.com/quote/230341>, accessed Wed May 18 17:55:12 2011.

due attention previously. What I thereby attempt is a recovery, in and through the conjunction of their two great works, of an otherwise lost feminine divine. I will demonstrate that using certain tools of contemporary French feminist theory in the psychoanalytic tradition to read Rosenzweig's *Star* and Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* with and against one another opens an unexpected way to develop out of the interplay of those two texts a concept of divinity that makes proper room for a feminine divine. I explore this feminine divine as not just an antithesis of a male God. Rather, I work through the above mentioned sources in order to explore a feminine aspect of divinity that presents itself in a potent and powerful reappearance of the feminine that has been lost and forgotten in western philosophy of religion as well as in the western psyche.

I defend the particular set of writers I use to support my thesis by relying upon an approach to academic scholarship that Buddhist scholar Jose Cabézón developed called “anarchic consequentialism.” This is a methodological approach that begins with nothing more than a hunch, a feeling that the exploration of a particular set of texts will bring about a fruitful outcome. Of course, if, after following through in exploring the hunch, one does not find the hoped for “return,” then the writer must be satisfied and take responsibility for the consequences of that negative outcome. However, the wager being made is that the consequences will be positive, and it is the potential for that positive outcome that justifies the risk.

I emphasize that my particular methodology is a feminist approach in that it seeks to recover what has been repressed, the feminine divine itself, by creating a space for its presence that has not been fully opened within the context of traditional philosophy of religion and theology in the West, even in its most recent forms. I aim to provide an

opening to face the feminine divine, in other words, that has not already been explored, depicted, and reified in Goddess imagery, or in any other form, in the West. It is, to the contrary and as I will demonstrate, one that has been forgotten and rejected.

This work functions in the spirit of Michel Foucault's commentary on Nietzsche's approach to history, that is of a genealogical approach to "truth," as Foucault describes in his essay "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History." I call it a *feminist* historical "methodology," in that it, like genealogy itself, "operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times." Like a palimpsest, in other words, as in Freud's reference to and use of the "mystic writing pad," there is an evocation, when facing a text, to not stop at the surface level of what appears on a tablet of history, but instead to seek for the traces underneath that have been covered over, hidden, repressed.

The model of a palimpsest evokes the very title of my dissertation, as well as the title of Rosenzweig's *Star*, the significance of which I find in Rosenzweig's description of the Star of David as the face in which God incarnates *Godself*. Within the Western tradition of philosophy of religion and theology, I note the assumption that one may not look directly at God and live; God is too awesome to "face." Looking directly at this divine is unbearable. It can only be approached indirectly, through a speculum of sorts. In his *Star of Redemption*, Rosenzweig presents such a speculum in which to view the Divine. But I suggest that behind this face/façade is another face. It is this other face that holds the power, like the image of Medusa, that is even more difficult to face. This other face, I suggest, exists behind the surface level of Rosenzweig's *Star* and is the face of the feminine divine.

My argument is that this “face behind the face” is the truth that may appear to be too unbearable to bear/see directly, or “face to face,” at least within the realm of western philosophy of religion/theology. I make an attempt to seek this face, expose it, and find ways to create another speculum to face the traditionally un-faceable as feminine divine.

I do that, however, not in the manner that a number of other feminist theologians, those who argue for the acknowledgement of a distinctly feminine deity, have attempted. Instead I go beyond former attempts to recreate or recapture a divine mother or goddess that is merely the antithesis of a male god.

Even as I mainly use the above-mentioned writers in my analysis, I also suggest that after scratching the surface of their texts, I find it useful to note residues from another writer/text, namely, Goethe’s *Faust*. I find in Goethe’s *Faust* insights that are related to a Nietzschean, and as such, *transvaluated*, feminine divine.

In terms of my methodological approach, I assert that it is uniquely feminist. I label it feminist because of my emphasis on the process of finding what has been repressed, hidden, and denigrated, like the feminine in western thought and life in general. I seek less a new mother substitute, however, and more a seemingly “empty” opening to something that has yet to be uncovered or revealed. This aspect of my method is integral to a feminist philosophy and theology, even a feminist approach to history.

Additionally, such an approach resonates with Cabézón’s “anarchic consequentialism,” in that I cannot give you the fruits of the project at the beginning, before I have made my journey; I can only hint toward potential consequences. My reader must trust that the direction I point may indeed offer certain rewards. It will be up to my reader to find out if this is true on his or her own.

Yet even if I fail and lose my wager, the risk would still have been worth taking. Jewish song-writer and poet Leonard Cohen's commentary on the lyrics to his song, "The Traitor," says that the song expresses just such a point about an aborted but still worthwhile journey: "It was about the feeling that we have of betraying some mission that we were mandated to fulfill and being unable to fulfill it, coming to understand that the real mandate was not to fulfill it and [that] the deeper courage was to stand guiltless in the predicament in which [one finds] [one]self."⁶

Following Cabézón's methodology of "anarchic consequentialism," even as I take responsibility of the outcome of the trajectory of my dissertation, I also hope to guide my reader to what will perhaps be some unexpected outcomes that he or she could not have formally anticipated.

It is in accordance with this same sort of methodological approach, in fact, that I first became interested in reading Rosenzweig's *Star* and Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*. I found in these texts that there was something that seemed to connect them. What I claim is the connection at issue, when made explicit, is the face behind the face of Rosenzweig's *Star*—the face of the feminine divine.

Furthermore, just as Rosenzweig and Nietzsche both emphasize a philosophy that serves life and thinks in the fullest sense "concretely," my approach to the feminine divine involves more than mere abstractions. Rather, it must necessarily involve embodiment, especially in and as actual women.

⁶ *Leonard Cohen I'm Your Man*. DVD. Directed by Lian Lunson. Santa Monica, CA: Lionsgate, 2005.

It is appropriate, then, that as soon as I read in any detail things by and about a certain female writer and vibrant personality, namely, Lou Andreas-Salomé, I realized that I could not leave her writings out of my project. It turns out that she in fact is the very embodiment—or so, at least, will I argue—of the “face behind the face” with regard to Rosenzweig’s *Star* and Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra*, most especially when those two works are brought, in our reading, face to face with one another. It is she, I will argue, who embodies the very feminine divine whose face appears beneath and through the face of those two texts—who *is* that very face itself, in its concrete embodiment, perhaps in her very being, but most certainly in her writing. If that is so, however, as I will try show it is, then adequately and accurately to read and interpret Nietzsche’s text and life, and then to go on to do the same with Rosenzweig’s text (and perhaps even his life, as well), may be greatly facilitated, at the least, by carefully reading her writings and considering her life.

In this connection, it will be useful carefully to draw a distinction between two very different sorts of questions that can fruitfully be raised about a philosophical text in relation to the life of that text’s author. On the one hand, there are such *historical* questions as how closely a philosopher’s or other author’s text can be correlated with events in her or his biography, or just what direct influences the works of earlier authors may have had upon the given author’s own thought and writing. On the other hand, there are what might well be called *hermeneutical* questions that can also be raised about the same authors and texts as those of concern in the just-mentioned “historical” questions. By “hermeneutical” questions I mean such questions, to cite the hermeneutical question that is most important for my own project in this dissertation, as that of whether

knowledge of a given fact or episode from the author's biography, as revealed by historical, biographical studies by qualified historians and biographers, casts new light on a given text—such light, perhaps, that it even requires developing an entirely new interpretation and understanding of the very *meaning* of the text itself, as such.

My dissertation is not historical, but philosophical. Accordingly, it is not concerned with the sorts of historical questions just mentioned, but it is very definitely concerned with the hermeneutical questions also just mentioned. In reading Rosenzweig and Nietzsche the way I do, I am not attempting to write anything like a psychobiography, seeking/speculating upon specific influences and all too often, in the process, creating an easy target for any responsible scholar to hit with volleys of critical arrows. Instead, I am conducting a hermeneutic exploration, one mindful of feminist readings focusing on embodiment, where real life and its issues are concretely raised and reflected upon in the text, and the text itself also comes out of real life.

In addition, it is worth observing at this point that I will be practicing reading texts not only in terms of the concrete life and life-issues that provide the context necessary for clear understanding of the text itself, but also as operating *against* life. Such a complex reading practice enters into the realm of what is 'hidden,' often precisely from the author no less than from others from the text. In contemporary western thought, I suggest, a philosopher's personal biography becomes most times, using Kristeva's term, abject. Here the notion of a feminist approach to interpretation is more like a revelation; it includes that which was hidden/invisible, what has been "cast off," includes it as perhaps very significant, indeed, as the possible "origin" of thought and being, and therefore necessary and important to bring into view.

Additionally, I stress how Nietzsche provides readers with a clear incentive to consider his life experience in coming to read *Zarathustra*, due solely to the fact that he writes, in *Ecce Homo* in particular, of the exact nature of his life experience when writing *Zarathustra*. A thorough reading of *Zarathustra*, I assert, cannot exist, therefore, without taking into account Nietzsche's own summary of his experience writing the text.⁷

Again, not only may it be appropriate to consider some aspects of a philosopher's biography in reading her or his text, but I propose a certain hermeneutic that allows for significant events and personal experiences to aid richly in interpreting a text. Certainly Rosenzweig and Nietzsche's writing style both evoke such a hermeneutic; their thoughts spur their readers to discovery, even self-transformation, through the reading of their texts. It is certainly the case that they express their thoughts using a truly literary style. Appreciating the significance of their style helps support my particular approach to their texts.

Both Franz Rosenzweig and Friedrich Nietzsche offer texts providing innovative and penetrating directions in the history of western philosophy in general, the former within the context of Jewish philosophy the latter as the forerunner for postmodern continental philosophy. Rosenzweig and Nietzsche demonstrated innovation in their ability to break with tradition. They were also able to bridge philosophical traditions of the past with a new type of philosophical thinking and writing. One attribute among others that makes their works so innovative is the evocative style of their writing; they

⁷ Paul Mendes-Flohr in fact suggests that one must take into account Rosenzweig's encounter with Margrit (Gritli) Rosenstock-Huessy during the time he was writing the second part of the *Star*. Paul Mendes-Flohr, private conversation, July 29, 2010.

both wrote in a prose that is more poetic than didactic. The most well read and widely accepted translators of Rosenzweig's *Star* and Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, William Gallo and Walter Kaufman respectively, each note the unique writing style of both philosophers.

Gallo writes in his translator's preface to the *Star*: "*The Star of Redemption* is no ordinary book, and its translation is no ordinary task. To do it justice, the translator must approach it more like poetry than like a work of prose." Not only does Rosenzweig's style of writing resemble more "poetry than . . . prose," it is also filled with references to works considered more literary than philosophical. Gallo continues: "Rosenzweig's magnum opus is, furthermore, a veritable mosaic of citations and allusions. [. . .] In particular Rosenzweig spoke the language of Goethe's *Faust* and other German classics."⁸

Walter Kaufman writes similarly of Nietzsche's prose, even if in a critical and derisive manner: "Zarathustra . . . cries out to be blue-penciled; and if it were more compact, it would be more lucid too." Despite such reservations, however, Kaufman acknowledges a certain strength in Nietzsche's style: "Even so, there are few works to match its wealth of ideas, the abundance of profound suggestions, the epigrams, the wit. What distinguishes Zarathustra is the profusion of 'sapphires in the mud.'" Kaufman concludes: "But what the book loses artistically and philosophically by never having been critically edited by its author, it gains as a uniquely personal record."⁹

⁸ William W. Hallo, preface to *The Star of Redemption*, by Franz Rosenzweig (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), vii.

⁹ Walter Kaufmann, preface to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, by Friedrich Nietzsche (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 106-7. For an analysis on

Even as Kaufman may attempt to find redeeming value in Nietzsche's text as a "personal record," many philosophers from Nietzsche's day to the present find the personal nature of his writing less of a strength, philosophically, and more of a weakness. Yet this personal style is on a par with the type of feminist philosophy able to break from tradition and offer a new method of philosophical writing. Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, as well as Rosenzweig's *Star*, is filled with allusions to "Faust and other German classics"; both also have direct and indirect references to the Bible. Through such literary allusions, both writers call for their readers to uncover meaning in their work.

In this dissertation I have no concern with speculating on the possible "influence" of the Bible, or Goethe, on Nietzsche or Rosenzweig, because knowledge of such a text as the Bible, and the works of a writer of the stature of a Goethe, is simply a culturally pervasive given in any culture where such texts and works are themselves pervasive, as both the Bible and the works of Goethe were during the nineteenth century—and certainly well into the twentieth—in Germany. I suggest viewing resonances between the Bible and Goethe's *Faust* in terms of the model of a palimpsest. My goal is not so much to seek what may be the specific, direct influences or historical-biographical occurrences that may underlie given passages in the texts at issue. Rather, I will be exploring Nietzsche's and Rosenzweig's writings for residues of what may "believe" the text from a hermeneutical perspective, in the sense the verb believe that indicates cases in which the "surface" of the text—as a literary document, not as an historical-biographical archive—

Nietzsche's poetic style as fundamental to his philosophy see Eric Blondel, "Nietzsche: Life as Metaphor" in *The New Nietzsche*, ed. David Allison (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985) pp. 150-175).

may disguise the true nature of its content. My task, I reiterate, is not an historical-biographical one, but a hermeneutical-philosophical one.

Concerning the hermeneutical approach I am adopting, to take into consideration the personal nature of Rosenzweig's and Nietzsche's writing, as well as the literary references and allusions, even and indeed often the ones that operate below the level of even the author's explicit awareness, is simply indispensable for developing an adequate understanding of both their main texts. Both characteristics of their writing encourages their readers to stop, and think, to contemplate, sitting with the experience of not knowing for a moment, as the Greeks referred to with the word *aporia*. To doubt, in response to a text--to not be quite sure just what to say or to do, concerning what one is reading--is often, if not always, closer to truth, than the type of approach that would instead strive everywhere doubt arises to reduce as quickly the possibilities that arise in "not knowing," by resecuring the sense of safety that comes with the assurance (well founded or not) that one in fact does now know. Not only is one then certain that one does in fact know, rather, one also uses all one's logic to defend one's claim to certainty against any possible attack, often even going so far as to argue that only a text which permits such certainty deserves to be called "philosophy" in the first place.

Whereas analytical thinking is invaluable in many pursuits of knowledge, the philosophical truth in Nietzsche and Rosenzweig's writings, I assert, calls for their readers to allow for the space that often exists precisely in contradiction, paradox, and doubt. In approaching the particular texts I do, I wonder if readers are not closer to truth in a stalled moment, a pause, a loss, than in any moment of joy in the supposedly final acquisition of "mastery" of a philosophical text—or of life through "philosophy."

Any serious reader/student of Rosenzweig and Nietzsche must acknowledge in their works an explicit resistance to philosophical mastery. Nietzsche wrote about philosophizing with a hammer, and Rosenzweig's philosophical aim was to leave behind traditional approaches to philosophy as he viewed them, and as he saw them culminating in German Idealism, and instead to make education/philosophy serve life.

Indeed, the nature of both Rosenzweig's and Nietzsche's styles encouraged their readers to use a more integral approach in their study of philosophy. Furthermore, if there is one thing the two philosophers share, it is their insistence that philosophy should enhance living. This is a style, I will argue, that not only is similar to, but in fact helps delineate what I will explore as a feminist approach to a philosophy of religion. This stance stands in contrast to the philosophers associated with German Idealism, perhaps most notably Hegel in relation to Rosenzweig's writing, and Kant in relation to Nietzsche's life and writing.

Furthermore, these two philosophers include both a notion of progression as well as one of agon, or struggle, in both their writing and their lives. Indicative of an integral approach to philosophy as life, this struggle is not primarily intellectual for these men. It is not insignificant to note, as well, that they both suffered physically as well as mentally in their all too brief creative lives.

I suggest that it is through three common attributes—that of working against or in opposition to the past, having an ability to access philosophical meditations on truth in a manner that calls their audience to recall literary and artistic references to unveil a philosophical import of their writing, and lastly to do this in such a manner as to incorporate bodily understanding, through a type of experiential knowledge—that both

Nietzsche and Rosenzweig philosophize in a manner that, following the formulation of contemporary French philosopher and historian of philosophy Pierre Hadot,¹⁰ reflects not so much a life devoted to philosophy, as a philosophy able to enhance life.

Not only does philosophy for these men articulate human explorations of many aspects of human life, some directly or indirectly related to ethical and moral concerns, but they also provide texts that in some cases explicitly and in some cases implicitly lead toward altering not only some of one's thinking but also, in a more comprehensive fashion, one's entire world-view. In this way I will emphasize aspects of Rosenzweig's and Nietzsche's philosophy of life in terms that function as a predecessor to feminist approaches to the philosophy of religion in this respect.

I reiterate that the feminist aspect of their philosophy lies in large part in their insistence that philosophy itself must always arise in, remain in, and return to, historically concrete, embodied experience. In attempting to articulate the features of the "face behind the face" of Rosenzweig's main work, that is, the hidden divine feminine as it shines behind the both the *Star* and the Star (namely, of David), I note that, beginning with Plato, Rosenzweig viewed the trajectory of western philosophical thought as originating in the avoidance that which is the only inevitable: death. Moving from this realization I find Rosenzweig's *Star*, for all its seeming philosophical mastery, saves its readers from a form of philosophical suicide through a very long, and at times difficult journey to reach at last the view of the face of the divine at the end of the *Star*. As already indicated, I will be exploring how this divine is not the masculine monotheistic

¹⁰ See Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1995).

male god, but the divinity one can only meet, as I will attempt to demonstrate, by entering through the gate of love into life--the *feminine* divine.

Just as I first experienced on my own journey of reading the *Star*, I am convinced that I could not be the only reader of his text that felt transformed somehow, felt they had experienced an opening. It is this opening that I utilize as the only way to begin to approach the feminine divine, the gateway of love to open to life. I acknowledge my experience, but I do so because this is indeed why I begin my approach to the crux of my movement from death into life through a close reading of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*. I chose to view Nietzsche through the lens of Rosenzweig's *Star* initially because of the very plea they both initiate, a plea to pause and listen.

To speak in the manner of the New Testament, "for those who have ears to hear": I felt a call in Rosenzweig's text, to revisit Nietzsche, to praise him and critique him in seeking hidden truths. I utilize historical inquiry according to the paradigm of "genealogy," using the imagery of the palimpsest, or "mystic writing pad," to develop--to use Heidegger's way of putting it in his interpretation of Nietzsche's "Use and Abuse of History for Life"--a truly "critical" interpretation of our contemporary, "current" life-situation. Such genuinely "critical" history, or usage thereof, itself can only come forth, as Heidegger indicates, through turning to the past, as it is carefully preserved by what Nietzsche calls the "antiquarian" approach to history. At the same time, in order fully and truly to serve life, all genuine "usage" of history for life, as we might say (as opposed to its abusive usage "against" life), must also retrieve from the past that which can guide

and direct the living, as “models” or “monuments” to emulate (hence, the need for what Nietzsche calls “monumental” history), into the future.¹¹

Furthermore, it is only in keeping in mind together these three approaches to historical understanding (which the work of historians themselves can serve, but never replace), that one can *redeem* the past, in the way that Walter Benjamin, for one, implores his readers to anticipate, in his own writings. Benjamin’s approach to history is a “critical” one, in Nietzsche’s sense; and for Benjamin it functions to “redeem” the past itself--as, in her own fashion, Hannah Arendt emphasizes in her introduction to Benjamin’s *Illuminations*. I propose that it is only after Nietzsche, that Arendt may elucidate the notion of a critical history and/as philosophy by using Walter Benjamin’s distinction between a commentary and a critique. Arendt quotes Benjamin: “If . . . one views the growing work as a funeral pyre, its commentator can be likened to the chemist, its critic to an alchemist. While the former is left with wood and ashes as the sole objects of his analysis, the latter is concerned only with the enigma of the flame itself: the enigma of being alive.” In further delineating a critically historical philosophy for life, Arendt concludes: “The critic is an alchemist practicing the obscure art of transmuting the futile elements of the real into the shining, enduring gold of truth, or rather watching and interpreting the historical process that brings about such magical transfiguration . . .”¹²

¹¹ See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), sec. 76.

¹² Hannah Arendt, introduction to *Illuminations*, by Walter Benjamin (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 5.

In expanding the role of an historical critic, I will use the image of Benjamin's "Angel of History," as many others have before me, in order to present an accurate model of history for the time—though I suggest it is currently outdated in terms that apply to the present and will juxtapose it to another model of history, one that follows a feminist approach I see as more applicable to contemporary life.

In Benjamin's "Thesis on the Philosophy of History" he critiques both Paul Klee's painting "Angelus Novus" as well as Gerhard Scholem's poem "Gruss vom Angelus" in the following manner:

A Klee Painting named "Angelus Novus" shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him in to the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward.

The angel of history is not looking forward to the future, but it is facing backward. The backward glance is not identical to any one, or any conjunction, of Nietzsche's antiquarian, monumental or critical historical approaches. Instead, Benjamin's angel's face appears frozen, paralyzed, unable to guide and direct, unable to do anything, it appears, as its gaze is fixed permanently on the past. In contrast to the applicability Benjamin's image may have to "modernity," perceived through that image to be an arrested development, that image is not, I suggest, an adequate one to apply to what may be called, following current fashion, "post-modernity"--and beyond—at least if it is to

function, as Benjamin wanted his image to function, to “make whole what has been smashed.”

Instead of using Benjamin’s “Angel of History,” I suggest we could fruitfully use an image from an altogether different culture than Benjamin’s (or my) own: the image of what is called *Sankofa* in the West African tradition:

Sankofa is expressed in the Akan language as ‘se wo were fi na wosan kofa a yenki.’ Literally translated it means ‘it is not taboo to go back and fetch what you forgot.’ ‘Sankofa’ teaches us that we must go back to our roots in order to move forward. That is, we should reach back and gather the best of what our past has to teach us, so that we can achieve our full potential as we move forward. Whatever we have lost, forgotten, forgone or been stripped of, can be reclaimed, revived, preserved and perpetuated.¹³

Sankofa represents a philosophical approach to history I support in terms of a feminist methodology for a philosophy of religion or theology. It is significant to note, additionally, that the historical model of Sankofa offers imagery of a winged creature, like Klee’s and Scholem’s angel:

Visually and symbolically ‘Sankofa’ is expressed as a mythic bird that flies forward while looking backward with an egg (symbolizing the future) in its mouth The egg in its mouth represents the “gems” or knowledge of the past upon which wisdom is based; it also signifies the generation to come that would benefit from that wisdom The Akan believe that the past illuminates the present and that the search for knowledge is a life-long process. The pictograph illustrates the quest for knowledge, while the proverb suggests the rightness of such a quest as long as it is based on knowledge of the past.¹⁴

¹³ W. E. B. DuBois Learning Center Hub. *Beacon of Hope*. (2002). “The Meaning of the Symbolism of the Sankofa Bird.” <http://www.duboislc.net/SankofaMeaning.html> (accessed May 7, 2011).

¹⁴ Center for Teaching and Learning at the University of Denver. *Sweet Chariot: The Story of the Spirituals*. University of Denver, 2004. “African Tradition, Proverbs, and Sankofa.” <http://ctl.du.edu/spirituals/literature/sankofa.cfm> (accessed May 7, 2011).

The imagery of Sankofa elicits a certain Faustian “quest for knowledge,” yet it is a quest that does not serve individual tyranny, but instead creates a better future.

As the bird of Sankofa, looking backward while heading forward, I attempt in the methodological and sequential outline of my dissertation, with an eye focused especially on using what Nietzsche called a “critical” approach to history—with, of course, and following Heidegger, still leaves both his “antiquarian” and his “monumental” approaches in play, only now in and as background for the “critical” foreground. Using Arendt’s imagery, we could also say that it is through the “alchemist” as critic working magic with the residue of the past, kindling the flame of truth that continues to burn to this day, that a feminist approach to history and philosophy works in the service of life.

Again, for Nietzsche and Rosenzweig, philosophy must necessarily aid in promoting life. This is ever so crucial for our world today. The urgency of our world in crisis tells us so. I assert that given our own historical context, we no longer have the luxury to continue avoiding various crises in the world. To the extent that there is an ethical call in philosophy, as I draw out in my “antiquarian” move to return to Nietzsche and Rosenzweig, I do so only in preparing to become a feminist historical/philosophic critic. I assert that in pursuing contemporary philosophy today, the following question arises: Why hide from the truth by abusing the notion of, and claim to, purported philosophical “mastery,” following the past through the worn out pathways that have been traveled so many times before, to become a “master” of philosophy itself and uphold the “rules” of philosophical truth, when the truth has become, as Nietzsche noted during his own time, “illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are;

metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power; coins which have lost their pictures and now matter only as metal, no longer as coins.”¹⁵

I will now take a few moments to turn to my own philosophical journey. I do so in the hopes that my reader will thereby come to appreciate the context within which, and the spirit with which, my analysis in the following chapters should be taken. That context, at one level, is the region of so-called “continental European philosophy” within the broader realm of western philosophy in general as it emerges and is interpreted within the Western academic philosophy of today. But I also request my reader to break free a bit from that context, to follow me in following my own hunch--which has meanwhile become for me richly confirmed, as I hope will also be confirmed for the sympathetic reader who reads the chapter to come after this introductory one--there the standard academic approach to philosophy today misses something truly crucial that is still there to be discovered in Nietzsche’s and Rosenzweig’s great texts, something that can be discovered precisely by reading Nietzsche through Rosenzweig, and Rosenzweig through Nietzsche, as I will do.

Again, it is not through an interpretation of texts that reduces the flow of life and thought as it relates to a philosopher’s writing, but in a pause, a moment to open to other players, events, related to life, that what would be a philosophy in the service of life evolves. In addition to my methodological concerns, I turn to introduce some new vantage points from which to view my topic. What I suggest arises in viewing my topic,

¹⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lies in the Extra-Moral Sense,” in *The Portable Nietzsche*. trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking Press, 1975), 47.

through the feminist lens as I propose, is the possibility that there is another character that appears on the stage that in many ways, as I explore in my dissertation, “steals the show.” Most specifically what I acknowledge is that through learning of interactions and specific writings Nietzsche gives his readers regarding some of his primary philosophical perspectives, it becomes not only helpful but mandatory to include an analysis of Andreas-Salomé’s thoughts and life on her own as well as in relation to Nietzsche’s writings and life.

As I explore some of Andreas-Salomé’s writings, many not yet translated into English, I realize I need not apologize for bringing her into my reading of Nietzsche’s text, particularly first through the lens of Rosenzweig, then as she embodies some aspect of the hidden feminine divine I draw out of Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra*. I emphasize this particular reading is most appropriate, especially noting what Nietzsche wrote in terms of his own life experience in writing, or rather in his terms, “giving birth” to *Zarathustra*.

Certainly Andreas-Salomé wrote about various topics directly related and relevant to my exploration of a certain quality of Nietzsche’s text, that is of a struggle with a certain something, as Jacob wrestling with an angel. As I previously noted regarding Nietzsche’s texts, it is through the struggle, and consequently through the journey Nietzsche takes his readers on, that this particular reader wonders if his texts do not in some ways parallel his own personal sense of awakening. To firmly establish the point again, when I started to explore this idea, I found through an unexpected opening in these readings – what I describe as the feminine divine.

Just as Freud was haunted by something that he could not quite put his finger on in his *Moses and Monotheism*, I found an open enigma in reading *Zarathustra* – even as

an open wound -- that seemed to linger with me as it did for Freud even to his death. It is perhaps only within this opening, realizing that it, in itself, is not problematic, but it instead actually provides the necessary opening to see, that which had been forgotten, discarded or covered over. I sensed Andreas-Salomé as somehow connecting the *Star* and *Zarathustra*; there appeared to my eye, not only an actual rhizome-like connection with the major players in my philosophical narrative, that is between Nietzsche, Rosenzweig, Freud, and the French feminist following them.¹⁶ There is also much evidence to suggest she had something more solid than just an “anarchic” connection to Nietzsche, Rosenzweig and Freud.

For the sake of the purposes of this dissertation, however, I chose not to focus on an empirical historical approach, claiming philosophical influence, but again, instead on a critical historical philosophy. Such an approach views Andreas-Salomé not in terms of speculation concerning her being an underground, hidden, potential influence, but instead as a major player in her own right. I wonder if in taking a pause to contemplate this as a possibility, we may consider that it could be something more than a twist of fate, that we

¹⁶ Andreas-Salomé is even in some way connected to Rosenzweig, through Rosenzweig’s friend and colleague Martin Buber. Buber admired Andreas-Salomé and her writing greatly. He praised her essay “The Erotic.” See Nahum Glatzer *The Letters of Martin Buber: A Life of Dialogue* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996). Maurice Friedman wrote of the connection: “Buber had come to know Lou Salomé through her essay ‘Der Mensch als Weib’ [The Human Being as Woman] about which he wrote to Lou in a letter in 1906: ‘Every subject it seems to me possesses, if, at any time, then surely in ours, a single human mind that is there to present it and express its essence. In my eyes, such a relation obtains between this subject and you.’ It was then that Buber requested an essay from Lou on ‘The Erotic’ for his series on ‘Society.’” Maurice Friedman, *Martin Buber’s Life and Work* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1988), 172.

view Andreas-Salomé as the hidden “wife/sister” in terms of her relationship with Nietzsche, and also as “mother” with regard to her relationship with psychoanalysis.

From a feminist perspective, the obvious questions arises: Why was she underground, hidden, relegated to the murky realm of Nietzsche’s “biography,” or in Freud’s “biography,” while her male compatriots remained above ground, visible and therefore important? Certainly within an age of post-modernity and beyond, there are no “universal” rules that indicate she should be relegated within the realm of speculation, while the men she had connections with are instead viewed as providing philosophical and psychoanalytical thought that holds power and validity to this day. Certainly there is a gender bias here, concerning disregarding Andreas-Salomé’s life and work as well as in disregarding how Nietzsche’s and Rosenzweig’s lives, certainly within the context of certain of their writings, are crucial in interpreting their texts.

Rather than wallowing within some of the hermeneutical conundrums that arise within the “hermeneutics of influence,” as I mentioned previously, I present a different hermeneutic. In filling out an historical model not yet that of Sankofa, perhaps, but yet on the way to it, I refer to a critical history. This is an historical model that, as I have suggested, stresses the importance of carefully choosing and lifting that which is edifying from the past, and bringing it toward a monumental future that necessarily depends on a critical present. It is this critical present that comes forth in agon, as the alchemist/magician/critic burns the dross from the present and transfigures it into gold, in keeping the flame of truth alive.

In developing my argument, I refer to feminist philosopher and theologian Grace Jantzen’s approach to a feminist philosophy of religion based not on death (or as I qualify

it in terms of Rosenzweig's philosophy: the inability to face death), but on life. Jantzen calls for feminist philosophy of religion that involves a sense of "becoming divine," following Luce Irigaray's directive. She asserts a need for a "feminist philosophy of religion which seeks not merely to repeat the old arguments, even if in critical mode, but to break through to new ways of thinking that may open up divine horizons." Jantzen continues: "If the aim of a feminist philosophy of religion is becoming divine, as Irigaray has put it, and if this involves a projection of a female divine horizon and the development of a new female symbolic, then such 'openness toward the other,' a breakthrough to other ways of thinking and being, is indispensable."¹⁷

To state it another way, in this dissertation I will be working with Jantzen's insights concerning the critical importance of developing a "feminist philosophy of religion" from a continental feminist philosophical perspective. Furthermore my methodological approach, as I've described it, functions to help question some inherent dualisms in western thought such as reason/emotion, ideas/embodiment, male/female, self/other, etc., in an effort, ultimately, to move beyond them. I present a feminine divine, in fact, that goes beyond the either/or dualism inherent in western thinking.

My approach to developing a feminist philosophy of religion is likewise grounded within a feminist tradition which "turns on its head" notions of western metaphysics. This is a flipping of the so-called classical western philosophical presumption that not only emphasizes and favors reason and ideas, and, as such, is associated with a masculinist perspective, but also devalues embodiment, birth and death and, as such, all

¹⁷ Grace Jantzen, *Becoming Divine: Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 74.

of which are associated with a feminist perspective. I utilize writings of the French feminist philosophers Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, in order to situate, and to provide a justification for, my own aims in developing a feminist philosophy of religion originating from a reading of Rosenzweig's *Star* and Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*.

Toward that end, I make note of Kristeva's reference, as she expands upon Freud's writings/theory, to the maternal realm, as that time when the infant is not aware of the separation between self and other. Kristeva develops that idea in terms that resonate with Freud's notion of the oceanic feeling. This is a stage in human development that has become "abject," in Kristeva's terms, in western life and thought. I associate some key passages in Rosenzweig's and Nietzsche's texts as they relate to the maternal realm, and argue that the result provides a ground from which to develop a contemporary feminist philosophy of religion.

I utilize Irigaray's notion of a feminist approach to apotheosis, or becoming divine, as well as her manner of flipping western metaphysics on its head so as to stress life as originating in the womb. I refer to her *Speculum of the Other Woman* in emphasizing her reversal as a transvaluation of western metaphysics by re-envisioning the womb as what is real, not, as in the comparison she makes with Plato's allegory of the cave, the space outside the cave. Such a paradigm indicates how what has been devalued in western philosophical understandings, the womb associated with birth, and as a corollary with death, may find its rightful place in western life, particularly as it is associated with a feminine divine.

I will use Cixous's metaphor of a laughing Medusa as representative of a silenced woman, who in contrast to Freud's commentary on "Medusa's Head" not only speaks,

but laughs. Using that image will allow me to provide a model for a feminist philosophy of religion that finds its voice in a type of joyful *jouissance*, overflowing any attempt to devalue or silence a feminine divine.

I will argue that to make room for such a feminine divine requires a total transvaluation of metaphysics, even beyond what Irigaray alone presents. Rather than doing philosophy from the “top down,” or a “bottom up” perspective, I suggest, the sort of exploration I attempt into a feminine divine creates space for a new awareness not reduced to the either/or binaries of western philosophy of religion. Surely, within the context of the history of western philosophy of religion and theology, some philosopher’s argue for a “top down” approach to ethics, that is, that a transcendent God establishes moral order from above. Others, Peter Singer in particular, argue for a “bottom up” approach, claiming to be able to provide the basis of ethics and morals by using evolutionary theory to establish the justification for moral law.

I am not suggesting that the requisite “flip” in metaphysics be just a reversal of God/transcendent to evolutionary theory, as one side of the ongoing dialectic, but instead, as I will describe in more detail shortly, that it involves recognition of the feminine divine as what we might well call a “non-dual” perspective. This particular model for a philosophy of religion does not remain within the realm of concepts. Instead I present it as a model that allows for both a systematic, as well as embodied, approach to a feminist philosophy of religion, one able to establish and maintain its position in western thought, philosophy and culture.

To the extent I succeed in my endeavor, I will not only offer a unique perspective on Rosenzweig’s *Star* and Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra* as they relate to each other, but also,

in constructing notions of the feminine divine that have been hidden/latent in Western philosophy and history, provide a feminist reading of the texts that moves beyond the general confines of late nineteenth/early twentieth century Western thought. As stated above, I find room for a feminine divine in Rosenzweig's *Star* and Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*. I use the lacunae in Rosenzweig's interpretation of Nietzsche as the opening, not so much in the search for a "theophany," or a face-to-face encounter of man with God, but rather in a search for what I refer to as the face behind the face: Andreas-Salomé in her writing and influence/relationship with Nietzsche as she evokes and is the concrete embodiment, relative to Nietzsche and Rosenzweig, of the feminine divine.

Through this journey, I suggest, there is a path toward a future, based upon philosophical and theological pursuits that include the feminine divine. At the end of the journey, I will not be supplying a feminine divine in any type of form or formula already familiar within religious philosophical thinking in the West. I can only promise that it may come about through an indirect awareness – a quest for knowledge that calls for a recognition of aporia, of the pause, the emptiness or womb out of which everything arises. Such a feminine divine does not substitute for a lost Mother god, but instead rests upon the experience of stopping the struggle, and facing that which has so forcefully been denied/repressed in Western thought – as the ONLY gateway, in which to pass to see her face. It is this "face behind the face," as that home that we really never left – but can finally stop avoiding and turn to see: Our divine Mother. It is only through such struggle, agon, that we return to a home, from which we came – and truly know it for the first time.

To give a very brief overview of the sequence of my chapters, I begin in chapter two by emphasizing Rosenzweig's praise, then critique, of Nietzsche. Then, in chapter three, I defend Nietzsche, and in so doing include references to Andreas-Salomé. I bring forward in chapter four, following a more comprehensive Sankofa model of history, ideas concerning a contemporary feminist philosophy of religion that not only recognizes a feminine divine, but also opens up to a sort of theosophy turned apotheosis or "becoming divine" for women, as well as for men. Next, in chapter five, I emphasize how the particular manner Andreas-Salomé helps uncover the feminine divine in some ways goes beyond even my analysis of the feminine divine in chapter four. Within this trajectory, I develop a model for feminist philosophy that can inform and lead western philosophy of religion and theology in bringing greater awareness of the human condition, and also greater awareness concerning how philosophy may help guide individuals and society toward acknowledging the lost feminine. It is, therefore, a philosophy that addresses life and death, not a philosophy based on the avoidance of death.

Chapter Two: Herr Nietzsche: Rosenzweig's Wayward Disciple

In the *Star*, Rosenzweig refers to Nietzsche with both adoration and contempt. Jewish philosopher Richard Cohen notes how “Rosenzweig both praises and buries Nietzsche.”¹ As Rosenzweig seems to view Nietzsche both as prototype for his “New Thinking” as well as failing in being able to finally embody it, I offer a brief exploration of Rosenzweig’s praise of Nietzsche, and then explore some aspects of his critique of Nietzsche. In this chapter I not only include a section that situates Nietzsche’s philosophy within his historical and theoretical placement in time and space, but I also include references to some of Rosenzweig’s writing that provide openings toward what I define as the feminine divine I will later explore through close readings of Nietzsche’s texts. I do this in order to help clarify, as well as move forward in later chapters, how my readings of Rosenzweig’s and Nietzsche’s insights help open a way for a feminist philosophy of religion applicable and appropriate for contemporary western philosophy. My reading notes how Rosenzweig and Nietzsche complement and inform each other as well as provide the origin for a philosophical trajectory capable of moving forward toward a uniquely feminist form of post-modern philosophy.

¹ Richard A. Cohen, *Elevations: The Height of the Good in Rosenzweig and Levinas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 67.

Scholars have paid little attention to a comparative analysis of Rosenzweig's and Nietzsche's work. Cohen asserts that even though Nietzsche does not appear to figure prominently in Rosenzweig's *Star*, Nietzsche may in fact stand as a source of inspiration, if not Derridian *spur*, for Rosenzweig's entire text and thinking.

Cohen notes that the three references Rosenzweig makes to Nietzsche in the *Star* "appear precisely at the book's three pivotal points in the introduction to its three parts."² I support Cohen in contending that, as Rosenzweig indicates by placing his references to Nietzsche in the introductions to the three main parts, Nietzsche acts as a tacit guide, marking a shift in Rosenzweig's thinking at critical junctures in his text.

Rosenzweig's references to Nietzsche in the three introductions follow a pattern Cohen describes in the following manner: "Nietzsche's first appearance in the *Star* is positive, his second is both positive and negative, and his third appearance is negative."³ Cohen himself focuses on the first and third reference, paying special attention to the last "critical" assessment where Rosenzweig describes Nietzsche as ultimately falling short in fully embodying Rosenzweig's "New Thinking."

Concerning a reading of the *Star* and *Zarathustra*, I begin by focusing attention to the first positive reference to Nietzsche, establishing Rosenzweig's persuasive and unique perspective on Nietzsche. I then focus on the more negative references to Nietzsche as the crux of my analysis. I go beyond Cohen's reading to suggest that there is more to Nietzsche's thinking than Rosenzweig himself considered. I suggest this is the point where Rosenzweig shares in Nietzsche's philosophy of "agon," or struggle, in allowing

² Ibid., 68.

³ Ibid., 68-69.

for ambiguity, paradox, or antimony in his analysis. Even as Rosenzweig seems unable to appreciate the profundity of Nietzsche's text, both men attempt to reach toward a wisdom that cannot be captured in words. I suggest that what appears to be a divergence in perspectives for both authors in fact leads to a similar moment, one that leads toward an experience of a feminine divine.

Rosenzweig ultimately charges Nietzsche with not being able to succeed in setting forth a philosophy that Rosenzweig envisioned would fully engage and fulfill his "New Thinking." There is a gap in Rosenzweig's analysis, in that even as he critiques Nietzsche for in the end not fulfilling Rosenzweig's call for a "New Thinking," he never provides enough to sustain his critique. In chapter three, through further exploration of Nietzsche's philosophy I assert that rather than failing in a comprehensive philosophical paradigm such as Rosenzweig attempts in his own life and work, Nietzsche in fact answers Rosenzweig's call for a more practical, integral, or even therapeutic philosophy for life.

Rosenzweig on Nietzsche: Behold the Man As Philosopher

It is helpful to note the overall theme of each of the three main parts of the *Star* initially in order to understand better the potential significance of Nietzsche's influence on Rosenzweig's thought. Part One of the *Star* entitled "The Elements or the Ever-enduring Proto-cosmos" refers to the ground or foundation in Rosenzweig's overall movement in the *Star*, that is from death to life, or from the philosophical tenants of German Idealism toward his "New Thinking." Part Two entitled "The Course: or the Always-renewed Cosmos" refers to the course or path toward a type of liberatory philosophy. Part Three entitled "The Configuration or the Eternal Hyper-Cosmos" refers

to the fruitional aspect of his philosophy, as it moves toward entering into a type of philosophical promised land.

In structuring the three parts of the *Star* as they function in mapping out the progression of his over-arching theme, Rosenzweig's begins the text with the phrase "All cognition of the All originates in death, in the fear of death."⁴ He completes the text of the whole *Star* with the phrase "Into Life."⁵ Rosenzweig entitles the introduction to Part One: "On the Possibility of the Cognition of the All." In it Rosenzweig extols Nietzsche's philosophical prowess in breaking free from the Socratic philosopher. Rosenzweig finds Nietzsche emblematic of what Rosenzweig referred to as a "philosopher as man." Rosenzweig describes Nietzsche as not relying upon tradition alone in his philosophy. Nietzsche was creative in his philosophical endeavors. What he wrote was original, at least as far as it differed from the philosophical trajectory Rosenzweig lays out from "Iona to Jena." The manner in which Rosenzweig suggests that Nietzsche may be a potential harbinger of Rosenzweig's own "new thinking" stems from an image of Nietzsche stepping away from the German Idealist penchant for using philosophical understanding in terms of mental mastery and control. Rosenzweig finds this type of philosophy to be deadening. Rosenzweig also associates such philosophical mastery with using thinking to avoid that which is most difficult to face: death.

Thus, Rosenzweig finds Nietzsche to be emblematic of a "philosopher as man" able to break from conventional philosophical thinking, to come into his own in terms of his ability to address what authentic human existence may entail, and to go beyond the

⁴ Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*. trans. William W. Hallo (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971), 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 424.

confines of the western metaphysical tradition in general -- in other words, to step out of the matrix of philosophy as “cognition of the All.” Rosenzweig writes of traditional philosophy as being akin to an unnatural death. Philosophical writing becomes a form of suicide, firstly as it reduces all mystery and majesty of life into thoughts or concepts, and secondly as it functions to help avoid facing death.

In this first reference to Nietzsche, Rosenzweig describes Nietzsche as an individual who speaks against “the philosophers,” and exhibits what a more authentic mastery of philosophy entails. In describing Nietzsche, Rosenzweig writes: “Man as philosophizer [has] become master of philosophy—not as translated into mental terms, but as endowed with a soul, whose mind seemed to him only the frozen breath of his living soul.”⁶

Additionally Rosenzweig notes the tendency of the philosophers of German Idealism to favor thinking over speech. Nietzsche exemplifies a break from such a philosophy, as is evident in the title of Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Rosenzweig commends Nietzsche in these passages. In this way, Nietzsche does indeed function as a harbinger of Rosenzweig’s “New Thinking.” Rather than representing a philosopher who writes philosophy as a pre-thought-out monologue, Nietzsche’s Zarathustra speaks first as a living soul, addressing what is relevant in his journey and standing at any given moment. His is a philosophy of dialogue, based on the I-thou model of philosophical/theological discourse; he is a representative of Rosenzweig’s *Sprachdenken* (speech-thinking), even if only, for Rosenzweig, as I will explore shortly, it arises

⁶ Ibid., 10.

through what Rosenzweig suggests is a “pagan” source as the inspiration for Nietzsche’s writings.

In support of Nietzsche, Rosenzweig evokes the Faustian: “Philosophy had promised to give him compensation in the form of mind in return for selling it his soul . . .”⁷ As Nietzsche seems able to break free from conventional dualistic idealisms such as soul/mind, order/disorder, morality/immorality, good/evil, and at least according to his own perspective masculine/feminine, he does not succumb to the temptation of so many of the German Idealists, that of ‘selling his soul’ to German Idealism as it symbolically functions in the role of Mephistopheles in Goethe’s *Faust*. According to Rosenzweig, therefore, Nietzsche was not tempted by the devil’s deal.⁸

Before I turn to a more thorough exploration of Rosenzweig’s assessment of Nietzsche, however, I will make a few preliminary comments on Nietzsche as he is situated in the history of western philosophy as well as qualify certain points concerning the comparison between Nietzsche and Goethe’s *Faust*. I do so in order to provide additional historical and theoretical grounding for Rosenzweig’s praise, and then critique of Nietzsche.

Nietzsche in the “Age of Spiritual Reproduction”

As I have noted, for Rosenzweig, Nietzsche’s philosophical path was altogether different from those that came before him. He appeared undaunted in seeking to go beyond and break free from conventional thinking. Ambiguity arises in making a

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Emphasizing the ambiguous nature of the connection between Nietzsche and Faust and in contrast to Rosenzweig’s interpretation of Nietzsche’s relationship to the Faustian legend, some interpreters view Thomas Mann in his *Doktor Faustus* as suggesting Nietzsche does in fact succumb to the Faustian bargain.

comparison between Faust and Nietzsche, however. Nietzsche's life does appear in some respects to resemble Faust in that Nietzsche seemed never satisfied with what he had and with what he knew; Nietzsche seemed to be always longing for more, to climb higher and higher mountains. Yet I find there to be a difference between Nietzsche and the Faustian model. Unlike Faust, Nietzsche didn't appear to favor a Promethean-bound longing made manifest as insatiable desire over forgetting his origins, or the past. He valued the past; he addressed the significance of historiography in many of his writings.

In functioning in the role of historical "critic," to use the term Hannah Arendt does of in her introduction to Walter Benjamin's *Illuminations*, Nietzsche was intrigued with returning to the Greeks. Even though he tended to present Plato as a foil to his philosophical perspectives, I find it relevant that Nietzsche made multiple references to Plato. Nietzsche appeared to be in agon, grappling with Plato's core ideas. I argue Nietzsche seemed to be working through some of Plato's major philosophical assumptions in his own work. If, as Rosenzweig would agree, Plato is the forbearer of western metaphysics, favoring the search for the ideal form or essence as truth over embodied life, Nietzsche would certainly in turn proclaim the value of retaining an emphasis on embodied life over a search for a transcendent ideal essence.

Even as Nietzsche seemed motivated to seek higher and higher ground, his recognition of the importance of the origins of his philosophical thought tempered his desire to go beyond conventional norms. For example, in his first and much-anticipated major philosophical work *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche focused on Greek tragedy. In this text he worked toward an integration of opposites in Greek drama, that of the Dionysian and the Apollonian. Here Nietzsche explored the seemingly ubiquitous,

ongoing assumption of western philosophy of a dualistic perspective in art criticism, that of a dichotomy between creative energy and form. For Nietzsche great art depends upon a skillful integration of the creative impulse associated with spirit and will, and the skill and discipline needed to organize and harness creativity. I note that the notion of spirit for Nietzsche is less in terms of spirit as it may be associated with religious piety and purity, and more in the sense of Henri Bergson's *élan vital*. Even as Nietzsche wrote the *Birth of Tragedy* early in his writing career, his references to the Dionysian contain the seed of what would become his notion of the will to power.

Nietzsche was not advocating a simple elevation of the Dionysian over the Apollonian, however. The Apollonian form was also important for Nietzsche. He acknowledged the importance of the stunning majesty Apollo represented in relation to great artwork. Form provided the means one may use to harness the at times chaotic yet potent energy of the Dionysian. When both come together through skillful integration, the Dionysian can instill depth to an otherwise superficial, banal art based only on proper or ideal form alone. As I will explore in later chapters, the Dionysian, but more specifically the will to power, in many ways is associated with the feminine for Nietzsche; his ultimate notion of the divine, therefore, Therefore I will argue, does not favor the Apollonian male God, nor the Dioynsian female God, but a skillful integration of the two.

Nietzsche not only emphasizes the need to return to the Greeks in *The Birth of Tragedy*, he also attempts a return of sorts in *Zarathustra*, utilizing the name of a figure associated with an even earlier point in time in Zoroastrianism. Conventional historical approaches to Zoroastrianism identify it as the movement that first created a sense of

duality between good and evil. Judaism and Islam both arose during this time; Zoroastrianism influenced both traditions. Nietzsche appears to be seeking not so much the origin, but a beginning to what he finds plagues western philosophy and theology, that of dividing good from evil, light from dark, right from wrong, etc. Returning to this time for Nietzsche is quite a radical move. He returns to the *roots* of dualistic thinking in the west in order declare a more nuanced and potentially transformational thinking that goes “beyond good and evil.”

Ecce Homo: Philosopher as Man or Man as Philosopher?

For Rosenzweig, Nietzsche’s philosophical path was altogether different from those that came before him. To Rosenzweig, Nietzsche appeared undaunted in seeking to go beyond and break free from conventional thinking including a dualistic approach to reality. Rosenzweig asserts Nietzsche was not split by such dichotomies: “For Nietzsche [the] dichotomy between height and plane did not exist in his own self: he was a piece, soul and mind a unity, man and thinker a unity to the last.”⁹

In the section “Metaethics” Rosenzweig describes Nietzsche as one able to transcend another dichotomy, the one between a “world-view” and life. Rosenzweig considers how Nietzsche opens a “new world . . . unlocked to reason . . . lying beyond the orbit described by ethics.”¹⁰ It is crucial to note that for Rosenzweig, Nietzsche does not open the new world unlocked to reason and beyond ethics as a conceptual thinker. Rosenzweig suggests there is something radically unique to Nietzsche's philosophy. Nietzsche philosophizes as an individual human being, “a prosopographically determined

⁹ Ibid., 9.

¹⁰ Ibid., 11.

being, [one who] stepped out of the world which knew itself as the conceivable world, out of the All of philosophy.”¹¹

Furthermore, I suggest that there are three common attributes between Nietzsche and Rosenzweig -- that of working against or in opposition to the past, (for Nietzsche this means mainly against Kant and for Rosenzweig this means mainly against Hegel) having an ability to articulate philosophical meditations on truth in a manner that invites the audience to recall literary and artistic references to unveil the philosophical import of what they are reading, and lastly to do this in such a manner as to incorporate bodily understanding, through a type of experiential knowledge. Thus, both Nietzsche and Rosenzweig philosophize in a manner that, following the formulation of contemporary French philosopher and historian of philosophy Pierre Hadot¹² reflects, not so much a life devoted to philosophy, as a philosophy able to enhance life. The first of the common attributes, that of working against Kant, Hegel and German Idealism, I unpack in this chapter. The second attribute involving the use of a more literary approach to philosophical truth, I was able to highlight in my introduction. I focus on the last common attribute, that of “writing with blood,” according to Nietzsche’s own self-descriptive phrase, that of incorporating all of one’s embodied being, in chapters three and four, as I relate such an emphasis on an embodied philosophy with a feminist approach to philosophical understanding.

¹¹ Ibid., 10. Paul Mendes-Flohr notes in William Gallo’s translation the arcane nature of the word prosopographically in this passage. The word in German simply means someone who has both a first and last name. Paul Mendes-Flohr, private conversation, July 29, 2010. (Barbara Galli’s translation comes closer to capturing this meaning.)

¹² See Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1995).

Rosenzweig's Critique of Nietzsche

Due to the fact that Nietzsche's philosophical thinking arises as from "a prosopographically determined being," Nietzsche embodies Rosenzweig's thought. What becomes problematic for Rosenzweig, however, is that for Nietzsche, his subjectivity is paramount such that it may not only lead toward a type of solipsism but it also becomes impervious to methodology. Clearly a contemporary reader of Nietzsche's text finds Rosenzweig's critique false when one considers Nietzsche's emphasis on the need for Apollonian form as it functions in the important role that discipline, structure, and method play, along with what one may qualify as the subjective as Dionysian, in being able to attempt a philosophy as life. Nonetheless, in contrast to how he views Nietzsche's shortcoming, Rosenzweig stresses the need for a clear-cut "methodology" as he emphasizes the notion of a "path," or course as the main theme of Part Two of the *Star*. This is keeping in line with Rosenzweig's implicit focus on the importance of systematic thinking.¹³

Additionally, Rosenzweig criticizes theologians at a crucial juncture in the history of western philosophy and theology, roughly around 1800, for using science to sustain theology's survival into modernity. Rosenzweig sees the loss of the true divine/miraculous/ revelation in a theology that relies too heavily upon scientific means/method. What Rosenzweig calls for is a philosopher able to bridge both embodied subjectivity and the appropriate methodology, associated not with scientific method, but

¹³ For a thorough exploration of the significance of Rosenzweig's methodology in the *Star*, see Benjamin Pollock, *Franz Rosenzweig and the Systematic Task of Philosophy* (New York City: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

instead with divine revelation. In fact for Rosenzweig there could be no other model for a philosopher that could revive the western philosophical tradition.

Although Rosenzweig admired Nietzsche for fulfilling the role of a “point of view philosopher,” Nietzsche couldn’t provide the ultimate model in Rosenzweig’s view because Rosenzweig also stressed the need for revelation to guide philosophy’s hand. As Nietzsche seemed to be void of any belief in God, Rosenzweig may have assumed that Nietzsche was, therefore, simply unable to receive revelation, at least not from a truly divine source. For Rosenzweig, Nietzsche was *too* subjective, and his ideas perhaps stemmed from a questionable source of revelation. Again, Rosenzweig felt that Nietzsche did not pay sufficient attention to method/science, or that which is associated with submission to divine or secular/philosophical/scientific “law,” in order to receive “true” revelation.

Cohen provides his summation of Rosenzweig's perspective on Nietzsche in the following manner:

While Rosenzweig applauds Nietzsche for escaping the empty abstractions of Hegelian philosophy, for posing a philosophizing subjectivity against philosophical objectivity, he criticizes Nietzsche for escaping Hegelianism in the wrong way, or, rather, for escaping Hegelianism in the right way but insufficiently.

Cohen follows Rosenzweig in critiquing Nietzsche for being “pagan.” For Rosenzweig, Nietzsche’s paganism is insufficient. It is inferior to “Goethe’s pagan individualism.” But of most significance to Rosenzweig, are the problems he has with paganism in general. For Rosenzweig, Cohen writes, the “pagan option . . . is inferior to the revealed religious alternative offered by Christianity and Judaism.”¹⁴ Cohen highlights the

¹⁴ Cohen, 69.

ambiguity in Rosenzweig's thought about Nietzsche: even as Nietzsche was able to step aside from the historical philosophical trajectory, for Rosenzweig Nietzsche does not receive true divine revelation, that power that enhances and uplifts the merely human status and makes it more than human. As such, Rosenzweig states that Nietzsche cannot be open to the miraculous in human life and understanding.

Rosenzweig Opening to a Feminine Divine?

Rosenzweig ultimately critiqued Nietzsche as falling short, even as he had found in Nietzsche hope for the embodiment of his own “new thinking.” I will follow through to defend Nietzsche against Rosenzweig's critique in chapter three where I suggest that Nietzsche does in fact write through and about divine revelation, it is just that the source is not from what Rosenzweig would consider to be the true divine.

Before I explore, in chapter three, some aspects of how Nietzsche, although seeming to fall short of Rosenzweig's “New Thinking,” may in fact begin to fulfill it, I pause to note some aspects of Rosenzweig's writings that tantalizingly indicate an opening to what I call the feminine divine. There are certain passages in the *Star* that that I will highlight in order to lay the groundwork for my defense of Nietzsche against Rosenzweig's critique.

In Part One, Rosenzweig attempts not so much to return back to the “essence” of being, as such, for this is the task of the German Idealist. He instead emphasizes a return to what he describes as the basic elements of God, World, and Humanity. Rosenzweig wants the ground of his philosophical trajectory to be based on real world elements. He is not concerned with the essence of reality, but reality itself. He does this by focusing on the real world elements God, World, and Humanity as the fundamentals of reality. In not

focusing on the essence of things he deals with time and with death. He deals with God, World, and Humanity as they function in mortal and everyday life.

Originating in Rosenzweig's attempts to materialize what has become "immaterial" in western philosophical thinking, there arises a point of contention between Rosenzweig and Nietzsche. It is striking to note that even as Rosenzweig begins the *Star* with a reference to death or what one may call non-existence or emptiness, he does not fully elaborate upon the topic. Instead he quickly returns to the fundamentals God, World, and Humanity as the "beginning," or fundamental building blocks from which reality arises as the ground of being. This is a point where exploring some tangents in Nietzsche's thought may help actually flesh out Rosenzweig's thinking. I will do this in chapter three where I indicate that my reading of Nietzsche suggests his insights define what a time before time--a time before the basics, God, World, and Humanity-- may entail, in both an ontological as well as cosmological sense.

Clearly death and birth are related in Rosenzweig's approach to being and philosophy. Although there are multiple and various ways one may parse out this relationship, one very elemental way is to recognize Rosenzweig as suggesting that one must face death, in order to truly live a new beginning or rebirth. Again, as Rosenzweig attempts to move away from the natural penchant for philosophers in the western philosophical and theological tradition to seek for some elusive and immaterial essence as truth, he instead focuses on what he views as the fundamental elements God, World, and Humanity. In so doing, however, he does not present a thoroughgoing approach to death, at least not from an experiential perspective. In relation to this omission within the context of my argument, two questions arise: What is this non-existence or emptiness that

life not only returns to, but also arises from? Could Nietzsche's thought embody a recognition of just such a return to emptiness and arising, and embody it in ways that Rosenzweig may have missed?

Rosenzweig demonstrates his concern that German Idealism has “throw[n] off the fear of things earthly.” It is most important to note what he means by his use of the word “earthly.” He describes the earthly in a manner that evokes a connection as well as tension between death and birth—and, as a corollary, the feminine—in relation to the earth: “Without ceasing, the womb of the indefatigable earth gives birth to what is new, each bound to die, each awaiting the day of its journey into darkness with fear and trembling.” The earthly is associated with all things mortal, this would be birth as well as death. For Rosenzweig, philosophy “denies these fears of the earth.” He describes the earth as being associated with death as an abyss, from which the “free soul flutters away over”¹⁵

Rosenzweig seeks to face death, and I suggest facing death is aligned with facing birth, both of which seem to be aligned with the feminine in the context of the history of western philosophy that itself would function to enact an “unnatural” death. He suggests that in acknowledging that which has been associated with the feminine and in many ways dismissed in western culture, birth and death, there arises support for a type of dualism, that between birth/death or the body, and the eternal/infinite or the soul. In this split, the body goes the way of the earth, and “the free soul flutters away over . . . [the abyss].”¹⁶ Rosenzweig articulates a juxtaposition here, between an integrated body and

¹⁵ Ibid., 1.

¹⁶ Ibid.

soul as it faces death, and western philosophy's facile attempt to avoid death through a type of de-animated living.

As a fundamental point in the *Star*, Rosenzweig states what would become the quintessential existential position, and German Idealism's response to it:

Let man creep like a worm into the folds of the naked earth before the fast-approaching volleys of a blind death from which there is no appeal; let him sense there, forcibly, inexorably, what he otherwise never senses: that this I would be but an It if it died; let him therefore cry his very I out with every cry that is still in his throat against Him from whom there is no appeal, from whom such unthinkable annihilation threatens—for all this dire necessity philosophy has only its vacuous smile.

I assert Rosenzweig makes a conclusion, not so much associating death with nothingness, but in rendering it as “no ultimate conclusion but a first beginning.”

Rosenzweig appears to allude to something of substance in death, it is neither *nothing*, nor an “ultimate conclusion”; instead it is a “first beginning.” Initially Rosenzweig states that death is not what it seems, he then goes on to indicate that it is in fact irrefutable and cannot “be done away with.”¹⁷ What death truly is, however, that ultimate truth that somehow appears connected with birth or life, Rosenzweig does not explicitly define. I suggest that Nietzsche again, as I introduce this thought here and will further explore in chapter three, may in fact help demonstrate a type of experiential understanding of what facing death, and as its corollary life, entails.

It is significant that Rosenzweig does briefly refer to a type of nothingness as “not Nought,” but more in terms of a type of emptiness associated with the fecundity of a womb, or, as Rosenzweig describes it, in terms of the earth as origin. This is the point where, I suggest, Rosenzweig writes of the earth as womb/origin in ways that may

¹⁷ Ibid., 4.

resonate with a feminine divine. There are inklings of what one may call the “primordial” in his discourse. He unveils a reference to a type of feminine divine, yet also he seems to veil its significance as he couches it in terms of another tradition: one of the traditions of Chinese philosophy, namely, Taoism. It is nonetheless a significant point he makes; it is one that I will suggest is related to some aspects of Nietzsche’s thinking as well as some French feminist analysis following him in relation to developing a more fully fleshed out feminine divine.

In referring to Taoism in Part One, Rosenzweig describes the Tao as nothingness, yet also as the origin of everything. Rosenzweig approaches this particular “ground of being” as it relates to Chinese thought: “The Tao effects without acting, it is a god who keeps ‘quite as a mouse’ so that the world can move around him.” Rosenzweig continues:

It is entirely without essence; nothing exists in it in the way that every self, for example ‘exists’ in the Brahma. Rather it itself exists in everything . . . to use the analogy of the Upanishads, in the way the salt crystals exist in a solution [:] . . . in the way that the hub exists in the spokes, as the window exists in the wall, or the empty space in a vessel. It is that which, by being ‘nothing,’ makes a something useful, the unmoved mover of the movable. It is the non-act as the basis of act.¹⁸

Even as he brings it up, he appears quickly to dismiss this evocative reference to a “time before” temporal or mortal existence. So too does Rosenzweig appear to applaud Nietzsche as one able to break from the philosophical “cognition of the All,” only then to begin to discount his philosophical perspectives. Be that as it may however, it is clear

¹⁸ Ibid., 37. There is a difference for Rosenzweig between nothingness as Nought and nothingness as the potential ground of being. Rosenzweig may very well indicate a way to navigate the waters between nihilism and eternalism, yet, as I argue in chapter three, Nietzsche’s insights better help to articulate this notion of nothingness I associate with the feminine divine.

that, for all his praise of Nietzsche in the introduction to Part One of the *Star* which focuses on the need to transgress traditional and historical approaches to western philosophy/metaphysics, in the introduction to Part Two Rosenzweig provides a clear shift from praising to critiquing Nietzsche.

Divine Origin from Above or from Below

There is much to explore in Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* that sheds light on Nietzsche's particular form of philosophical discourse as it arises from within Nietzsche the man rather than from God. Nietzsche's narrative style itself is revelatory; his text functions as oracle. This stands in marked contrast to Rosenzweig's approach to revelation. As I've noted, for Rosenzweig, revelation must come from God. There is no other source for revelation. Nietzsche's "revelation" for Rosenzweig must necessarily be associated with "earth" religion, or paganism, and therefore demeaned and dismissed. Rosenzweig may approach this in terms reminiscent of what he calls the Nought. I argue that Nietzsche's source of revelation comes not from the Nought, but more from a place of creativity I associate with the emptiness Rosenzweig alluded to in Taoist thought, but did not expand upon. This emptiness I align with the feminine divine.

This is a source that, within the context of cultural, philosophical and theological assumptions that identify divinity as purely masculine, arises instead from another legitimate source of divinity. This is a divine source that may resemble paganism or earth-worship such that the "revelator" receives not from "above," but from "below." Rather than view the earth/paganism as "fallen" from the true source of the divine, using Nietzsche as a guide, it is possible to enact a transvaluation of paganism as well as a transvaluation of a masculinist approach to divinity.

It is crucial to emphasize that this other source, just because it is not from the Father God from above, need not be reduced to ‘darkness,’ heathenism or sorcery, thus propagating the split between eternalism and nihilism. This other type of divinity, as I have suggested, provides support for a feminine divine as we may identify it through in a double reading of Rosenzweig and Nietzsche’s texts. It is a source of divinity not coming from the traditional god of western theologians as noted, just as Nietzsche’s philosophy did not come from the traditional “gods” of western philosophy. This fact alone does not warrant excluding it as a source of authentic revelation, however; it may instead provide a way that could help show how the divine may not only begin to work through the relationship of God, world, and humanity, but in fact has already been doing so. There is no recovery of the feminine divine at work here, only recognition that it has always been present. Even as such, it is understandable that for Rosenzweig, there begins to be a chink in Nietzsche’s philosophical armor.

Chapter Three:
Feminine Divine: Facing the *Nought* and Becoming *Übermensch*

*he walks with me
to the gate of Home and leaves me.
I enter.*

Denise Levertov¹

[I am] already dead as my father, while as my mother I am still living and become old.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*²

In the preceding chapter, my defense of Nietzsche against Rosenzweig's claim that Nietzsche eventually falls short of Rosenzweig's "New Thinking," I use Goethe, particularly Goethe's notions of the feminine in *Faust*, to cast Nietzsche in a different light. In this chapter, after exploring an approach to the feminine in *Faust* that includes both an idealized version of the "eternal feminine" as well as a terrifying, yet powerful feminine divine in the "realm of the mothers," I assert that Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* includes a similar approach to feminine divine revelation. In doing close readings of some passages in *Zarathustra*, *Ecce Homo* and *Will to Power*, a collection of writings from Nietzsche's notebook that his sister Elizabeth Forster-Nietzsche later collected and published, I use Goethe to support Nietzsche against Rosenzweig. In addition, I propose that it is also of interest to see how some of Nietzsche's philosophical writings are

¹ "The Film." Dictionary.com. Columbia World of Quotations. Columbia University Press, 1996. http://quotes.dictionary.com/he_walks_with_me_to_the_gate_of (accessed: May 19, 2011).

² Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 222.

mirrored in his actual encounters with Lou Andreas-Salomé. I include some references to their interactions and also to some of Andreas-Salomé's writings to support this proposition.

Before moving to explore key passages in Nietzsche's texts that support my claim for a hidden feminine divine, I turn to Goethe as a writer who dominated German literature and culture during Rosenzweig and Nietzsche's lifetime. Both Rosenzweig and Nietzsche refer to Goethe's *Faust* in the *Star* and *Zarathustra*, respectively. I suggest that in Goethe's *Faust*, Goethe adds complexity as well as ambiguity in his references to the feminine. It was just such a complexity that I want to suggest Nietzsche picked up upon and developed.

Nietzsche and the Feminine

Nietzsche begins the first chapter, "Why I am so Wise," of his "autobiography" *Ecce Homo* with the following statement: "The good fortune of my existence, its uniqueness perhaps, lies in its fatality: I am, to express it in the form of a riddle, already dead as my father, while as my mother I am still living and becoming old."³ Nietzsche in a sense embodies both Rosenzweig's notion first of facing death, and second, of moving from death to life: Nietzsche declares his father, as Jean Graybeal comments, "with whom he strongly identifies, . . . is dead, above life, detached and safe." His mother, on the other hand "lives on, grows old, continues to give birth to himself . . ."⁴

³ Ibid.

⁴ Jean Graybeal, "Ecce Homo: Abjection and "the Feminine," in *Feminist Interpretations of Friedrich Nietzsche* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998) 157.

During Nietzsche's time the male patriarchal God of theology and the "gods" of western philosophical thought were both indeed "dead." Yet I highlight the point that Nietzsche's famous statement may not end with the iteration he first wrote in the *Gay Science*: "God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him."⁵ Nietzsche instead would add to this statement, asserting that not only is the male God dead, but the female god/mother lives on. I suggest that the two statements are intertwined for Nietzsche.

On my reading, Nietzsche's assertion about the death of God does not lead to nihilism as is commonly understood, but rather in the spirit of Virginia Woolf's admonition to "kill the angel in the house," toward a notion of a feminine divine as the "eternal feminine" that "lives on, grows old, [and] continues to give birth" On my reading Nietzsche harks back to Goethe's *Faust* in this passage. Nietzsche notes that any type of transformation or transfiguration must come about not through what William James may have labeled the "once-born" concerning religious devotion, but instead the "twice-born." I refer to James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* to make my point. James describes "two ways of life which are characteristic respectively of what we called the healthy-minded, who need to be born only once, and of the sick souls who must be twice-born in order to be happy."⁶ Nietzsche certainly would be of the twice-born type, needing as he does, first to descend in Goethe's terms, to the "realm of the mothers" before being saved by the "eternal feminine."

⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs* (New York: Vintage Press, 1974) 142.

⁶ William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (Rockville, MD, 2008) 127.

A religion based on a father God supports the penchant of western philosophy to seek a cognition of the All Rosenzweig critiques. In order to explain what I suggest was Rosenzweig's approach to the mystical All in terms of a feminist philosophy of religion, I refer to a feminine divine that is associated with stereotypical references to maternal love rather than paternal justice. Yet, the feminine divine goes beyond such facile gender valuations; it is a love that overflows and also originates in the realm of the mother. I assert it unfolds through a type of recognition of the maternal realm both in individual development as well as in the trajectory of western thought in general. Yet, I also emphasize it has to do with a going beyond gender characteristics altogether. On-going and throughout my analysis I will suggest it is through first a recognition of the maternal that one is able to transgress dualisms between mother and father divine.

It is worth emphasizing that what I refer to as the maternal realm is not like common notions of the "eternal feminine" during the nineteenth century, offering only models of a one-dimensional idealized feminine. Most interpreters of Goethe associate the "eternal feminine" with an overly romanticized version of what Virginia Woolf called the "angel in the house."⁷ I assert that Goethe provided references for the feminine, however, that included both this "positive" representation of the feminine, as well as a more frightening feminine in what he called the "realms of the mothers." I claim that it is this very dynamic between the two aspects of the feminine, one that Goethe first most clearly articulated, that I find in Nietzsche's and Rosenzweig's later writings.

⁷ It is an angel, it is significant to note, that Woolf felt a woman needed to kill first, in order, then to find her true authentic voice. I see a commonality here, between Virginia Woolf's admonition to "kill the angel in the house" with Nietzsche's approach to the "death of God" for his age and beyond.

Goethe writes about a descent to the Realm of the Mothers associated with the Nought. Mephistopheles speaks in Goethe's first reference to the "Realm of the Mothers" in "Dark Gallery":

I loathe to touch on more exalted riddle. –
Goddesses sit enthroned in reverend loneliness,
Space is as naught about them, time is less;
The very mention of them is distress.
They are—the Mothers.

As a uniquely Goethean version of a most abysmal thought, Faust responds: "The Mothers! Still it strikes a shock of fear. / What is this word that I loathe to hear?"⁸

Goethe opens a realm of the feminine that instills fear and trembling. In such a depiction, the "angel in the house" does not appear. This is a realm that involves trembling, but also respect. Nietzsche's moment of integration is as "the moment" we read of in Faust's final speech before he dies. It is "a moment" but also a space that evokes a maternal origin. Goethe's Faust describes this moment as one that includes both fullness and emptiness; it is one of fecundity, as well as, with Mephistopheles immediately following Faust's speech with a reference to the Eternal-empty, nothingness. Through Goethe's Faust Goethe plants a seed for Nietzsche. In Faust's final speech Goethe implies that in death comes an opportunity to face the Eternal-Empty, along with its accompanying Eternal-Feminine.

In reference to an earlier version of Faust's final speech, Goethe writes:

From the ditch, which crawls through swamps
And finally reaches the sea.
I win a place for many millions
There will I also dwell among them,
Stand truly upon my own ground and earth.

⁸ Goethe, *Faust*, 178.

I may say to the moment
Oh, tarry yet, thou art so fair!
The trace of my earthly days can
Never in eons disappear.⁹

Goethe expresses Faust's moment of recognition as the highest moment in contrast to Mephistopheles declaring death as Nought as a form of total nothingness and nihilism:

It is over! How to read this clause?
All over is as good as never was,
And yet it whirls about as if it were.
The Eternal-Empty is what I prefer.¹⁰

The devil would have one think that death is nothingness. This mirrors classical readings of Nietzsche's claim that "God is dead" as also a form of nihilism. I suggest instead that the death of god as Nietzsche declares it, is not associated with nihilism, but as a necessary prerequisite for the feminine divine to take her place in history.

I demonstrate this in referring to the above quoted passage where Mephistopheles states: "It is over!" as a demonic parody of Christ's last words: "It is finished." Goethe to some extent offers a transvaluation of the crucifixion, one that may appear to be Nought, but in reality leads to redemption. The redemption does not begin with God the Heavenly Father, but arises only from a recognition of the loss of this God as necessary in order to unveil a particular source of strength and illumination from a feminine divine. Just as Rosenzweig may assert not a negation of the all, but a positive affirmation of the non-Nought – here too is there hope for a continuing on, for life, for re-birth. Nietzsche also addresses such a moment in his *Zarathustra* that I find to be a critical turning point in the

⁹ Goethe, *Faust*, 479.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 329.

narrative in a manner that may be suggestive as both a postscript for Goethe's moment in facing death, but also as a precursor for Rosenzweig's affirmation of the non-Nought.

Hamlin notes the section immediately preceding Faust's death scene is entitled "'Midnight,' indicat[ing] a sense of moment at the turning point from the night toward new day."¹¹ Goethe seems to be suggesting something other than what may be deduced through dualistic notions of death verses life, darkness verses life, etc. He refers to the "Realm of the Mothers" in terms that resonate with what I will explore as Nietzsche's "most abysmal thought," that of the eternal recurrence. Goethe describes them through Mephistopheles's voice:

A glowing tripod will at last give sign
That you have reached the deepest, nethermost shrine;
And by its light you will behold the Mothers;
Some may be seated, upright, walking others,
As it may chance. Formation, transformation,
The eternal mind's eternal recreation,
Enswathed in likenesses of manifold entity;¹²

Inherent in Goethe's account is an opening to time eternal. The ever-recurring life that winds only along the same track eternally. I will explain this notion in Goethe later in the chapter, in Nietzsche's reference to the eternal return.

There is a sense of integration in what Nietzsche presents in relation to a feminine divine, one that involves, as he writes in *Ecce Homo*:

. . . a dual descent, as it were, both from the highest and the lowest rung on the ladder of life, at the same time a *decadent* and a *beginning*—this, if anything, explains that neutrality, that freedom from all partiality in relation to the total problem of life, that perhaps distinguishes me. I have a subtler sense of smell for

¹¹ Ibid., 478.

¹² Ibid.

the signs of ascent and decline than any other human being before me; I am the teacher par excellence for this—I know both, I am both.¹³

At the turning point of the structural approach to overcoming, as Nietzsche presents it, in this passage, Nietzsche describes the arising of an influx, when the father descending and the mother ascending meet. In this union, Nietzsche finds himself embodied. He personifies the crossing point in the structure. Nietzsche breaks through at this crossing point. This break-through is a precursor to his notion of *amor fati*, accepting sweetness and light as well as chaos and pain through integrating and not only accepting, but also loving both, Nietzsche enters into a world of love. Clearly for Nietzsche this transformative experience is associated, just as in Goethe's *Faust*, with love and also with what I am calling the feminine divine.

I associate this feminine divine with love; it is a love that may be as strong as Rosenzweig's reference to love; but it is a love that does not depend or rely upon a transcendent God above, but instead on an integration of the transcendent and the immanent I associate with the feminine divine. As in the above quoted passage from *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche refers to an integration that includes not only facing death, but also “going beyond” dualisms such as the ideal and material, the Apollonian and Dionysian, the male and female, and the father and mother. It is in and through this turning point that Nietzsche refers to a critical moment in time going “beyond good and evil”; for in it he embodies going beyond traditional thinking, and embodies, I argue, Rosenzweig's “new thinking.”

¹³ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 222.

I associate Nietzsche's "going beyond" with notions of a feminine divine; it is through an experience of non-duality related to recognizing attributes of a still living feminine divine that existed before the split between self and other, and with the attendant dualisms following the initial split. I utilize a reference Freud wrote of, known as the recapitulation theory, "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny," in reference to this initial split: there was a time in our "evolutionary" history, just as there was a time in our individual lives, when perception of self splits off from the primal all from which being arises. Not only did Nietzsche's writings include a hidden but potent feminine divine for his time, but he also provided western philosophy with a seed for its collective and eventual overcoming. Nietzsche reflects Goethe here: Nietzsche's moment of "going beyond" equates with "the moment" I alluded to earlier in Faust's final speech before he dies.

As with Goethe's Faust's transformative "moment" arising after the descent into the "realm of the mothers," Nietzsche begins the section before he writes of his own transformative "moment" so as to mark it as a critical turning point both in Zarathustra's journey and in Nietzsche's text. Nietzsche begins the section "The Wanderer" with the following sentence: "It was about midnight when Zarathustra started across the ridge of the island so that he might reach the other coast by early morning." Nietzsche provides a prelude to the introduction of the eternal recurrence with Zarathustra's speech:

I am a wanderer and a mountain climber, he said to his heart; I do not like the plains, and it seems I cannot sit still for long. And whatever may yet come to me as destiny and experience will include some wandering and mountain climbing: in the end, one experiences only oneself. . . . What returns, what finally comes home to me, is my own self and what of myself has long been in strange lands and scattered among all things and accidents. And one further thing I know: I stand

before my final peak now and before that which has been saved up for me the longest. Alas, now I must face my hardest path! Alas, I have begun my loneliest walk! But whoever is of my kind cannot escape such an hour—the hour which says to him: ‘Only now are you going your way to greatness! Peak and abyss—they are now joined together.’¹⁴

Nietzsche continues on in exploring the tension between height and depth; “It is out the deepest depth that the highest must come to its height.”¹⁵ He writes of the hour approaching, where “peak and abyss . . . are . . . joined together.” Nietzsche depicts such a synthesis through a doubling of a doubling, or rather as Zarathustra deals with his nemesis, the dwarf.

In a showdown between Zarathustra and the dwarf, coming upon on their path a gateway, Zarathustra makes the following declaration:

‘Behold this gateway, dwarf!’ I continued. ‘It has two faces. Two paths meet here; no one has yet followed either to its end. This long land stretches back for an eternity. And the long lane out there that is another eternity. They contradict each other, these paths; they offend each other face to face; and it is here at this gateway that they come together.’¹⁶

When Nietzsche writes about two movements, present to past, and future to present, he does so in referring to a turning point, with significance added at the crux of his model of time that transcends linear time as well as logical analysis. As Faust’s final speech marked the significance of the opportunity to face death in terms set in time as a *moment*, Nietzsche also marks the space I associate with the feminine divine in temporal terms: “The name of the gateway is inscribed above: ‘Moment’.”

Nietzsche then goes on in referring to Zarathustra’s speech: “‘Behold,’ I continued, ‘this moment! From this gateway, Moment, a long, eternal lane leads

¹⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (New York: Viking Press, 1966) 264.

¹⁵ Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 266.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 269-270.

backward: behind us lies an eternity.” Nietzsche then continues with his presentation of the doctrine of the eternal recurrence:

Must not whatever can walk have walked on this lane before? Must not whatever *can* walk have walked on this lane before? Must not whatever *can* happen have happened before? And if everything has been there before – what do you think . . . of this moment? Must not this gateway too have been there before? And are not all things knotted together so firmly that this moment draws after it all that is to come?¹⁷

Nietzsche describes his “entryway” into the doctrine of eternal recurrence in terms of a gateway. It is crucial to note that the gateway to the doctrine of the eternal recurrence is not the goal; it is only the entryway into something beyond the eternal recurrence. It is a test of sorts, for human overcoming, to be able to face, not death or life, but the eternal repetition of all that has been or is or will be. This “most abysmal thought” is the gateway and the word “moment” hangs above it. It is the moment when the darkest hour has arrived; but with the darkness comes the potential for overcoming. It comes through accepting all of life, of willing even all the pain, chaos, and darkness, as well as all the light and glory that has ever been, to recur eternally. Nietzsche then heralds the entryway through the gate, not just in accepting, but also willing and loving all of existence. His *moment* is associated with, if not facing death, then facing the transitory nature of existence.

I describe Zarathustra’s approach to the “Realm of the Mothers” as necessary for his eventual overcoming, an overcoming that could not take place were it not for aspects of a feminine divine that includes the “realm of the mothers.” I argue that for Nietzsche, such a descent associated with the “realm of the mothers” arises for him in his “most

¹⁷ Ibid., 270.

abysmal thought,” that is in the form of the eternal recurrence, as he first refers to it in Part Three of *Zarathustra*. Nietzsche approaches the topic in the following manner: Zarathustra is caught in his dualistic revelry, a theme continued throughout the text, of Zarathustra split in two, speaking to his own heart, or to others as parts of himself, including the dwarf, the spider, the “old women,” etc., in a manner which he eventually overcomes. I suggest that his moment of overcoming is in fact directly related to his ability to go “beyond good and evil.”¹⁸

Nietzsche writes of the dwarf with him, weighing him down, whispering things of the most dismal nature into his ear. He then refers to a spider, as well as the light of the moonlight in a manner that suggest them as representatives of his own soul’s deliberations on life. In fact the moonlight itself has all the disparate fragments of his being and self become as one in the soft whispering of their minds. Zarathustra says as much: “And this slow spider, which crawls in the moonlight and this moonlight itself, and I and you in the gateway, whispering together, whispering of eternal things—” All these separate entities begin to coalesce in their thoughts and whispering concerning

¹⁸ Poet Richard Sassoon refers to Oedipus’s own mother, Jocasta in representing one who is initially able to “go beyond good and evil.” According to the prophecy that he would kill his father and marry his mother, Oedipus found he had indeed committed the horrific act and could not bear to continue on. Jocasta, before taking her life, first responded with the following words:

Fear? What should a man fear? It’s all chance, chance rules our lives. Not a man on earth can see a day ahead, groping through the dark. Better to live at random, best we can. And as for this marriage with your mother—have no fear. Many a man before you, in his dreams, has shared his mother’s bed. Take such things for shadows, nothing at all— Live, Oedipus, as if there’s no tomorrow! (Oedipus the King, 1068–1078).

Richard Sassoon, private conversation, July 30, 2008.

the eternal recurrence: “Must not all of us have been there before? And return and walk in that other lane, out there, before us, in this long dreadful lane—must we not eternally return?”¹⁹

Out of this prelude to overcoming, through the whispered revelry on the eternal return, a dog interrupts the experience. This dog brings Zarathustra back in time to his youth, when he remembered a dog “howl like this.” Nietzsche continues: “And I saw him too, bristling, his head up, trembling, in the stillest midnight when even dogs believe in ghosts—. . .” Zarathustra appears to “wake up” as he then wonders: “Where was the dwarf gone now? And the gateway” And the spider? And all the whispering? Was I dreaming, then? Was I waking up?”²⁰

Nietzsche plays within the twilight zone of perception in these passages, mixing and confusing clear demarcations between dream and reality, and between reality and dream. On my reading of this passage, there appears to be no dualism/division anymore concerning perhaps the most human of all attributes of being human, that is of valuing conscious thinking over dreams and visions.

Zarathustra then finds himself transported to a lonely mountaintop:

Among wild cliffs I stood suddenly alone, bleak, in the bleakest moonlight. *But there lay a man.* And there---the dog, jumping, bristling, whining—now he saw me coming; then he howled again, he *cried*.

Following Nietzsche’s ongoing leitmotif throughout his writings, that of transvaluation, it is significant that it is not a god but an animal, a being from a “lower” realm of life, lesser than human, that hearkens the moment of overcoming:

¹⁹ Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 270.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 271.

Had I ever heard a dog cry like this for help? And verily, what I saw, --I had never seen the like. A young shepherd I saw writhing, gagging, in spasms, his face distorted, and a heavy black snake hung out of his mouth.

The most dreadful thing, a black snake hung out of the shepherd's mouth. The imagery is striking. As I interpret this passage, I see the snake as an icon for evil/Satan as well as feminine wisdom, and correspondingly associated with Goethe's "realm of the mothers." This snake may also aptly connote the Greek myth Medusa's Head, an image I associate with a feminist philosophy of religion in chapter four. The snake was stuck in the shepherd's mouth. In this moment certainly the natural impulse would be to spit out the snake, to get rid of the most abysmal thought. It was a horrific moment: "Had I ever seen so much nausea and pale dread on one face? He seemed to have been asleep when the snake crawled into his throat, and there bit itself fast." It was an abysmal, evil stealthily crawling snake entering into the shepherd's mouth, awaking his complacent sleep and arresting his soul.

Nietzsche first shows Zarathustra exhibiting his more human tendency to try to relieve the distressed Sheppard of such nausea and dread: "My hand tore at the snake and tore in vain; it did not tear the snake out of his throat." Nietzsche then refers to something not from beyond, but from within himself, crying out the command for overcoming. The demand did not include a return to good and evil, trying to find a weapon to kill the snake, as in a tit for a tat, for example. Instead the path toward overcoming for Nietzsche moved in the opposite direction: "Then it cried out of me: 'Bite! Bite its head off! Bite!'"

The way to overcoming is not through fighting against the other but in a thorough integration of other and self, symbolized as a very body-centered "ingestion" of that

which is evil, wicked, dark, deathly, dreadful, etc. The All becomes one. His path to overcoming was not to “overcome evil,” it was to obliterate all notions of good and evil, or other forms of dualistic approaches to thought and perception, altogether. Zarathustra declares in his most transformative *moment*: “Thus it cried out of me—my dread, my hatred, my nausea, my pity, all that is good and wicked in me cried out of me with a single cry.”²¹ All that was fragmented, as through a looking glass darkly, became one. It became whole in that moment for Zarathustra.

This is an oneness in terms of a transvaluation of Rosenzweig's cognition of the All. Nietzsche may provide a demonstrative model of Rosenzweig's transcendent One related to mystical union with the divine. Nietzsche addresses those whom Rosenzweig may describe as the philosophers seeking the cognition of the all, as those who love to solve puzzles; they bring to clarity what is unknowable. Nietzsche is calling them, evoking them, spurring them on toward overcoming.

He does so not by straightforward logical analysis or philosophical debate; he instead poses a riddle:

You bold ones who surround me! You searchers, researchers, and whoever among you has embarked with cunning sails on unexplored seas. You who are glad of riddles! Guess me this riddle that I saw then, interpret me the vision of the loneliest.²²

He addresses the doctors of theology as well:

For it was a vision and a foreseeing. What did I see then in a parable? And who is it who must yet come one day? Who is the shepherd into whose throat the snake crawled thus? Who is the man into whose throat all that is heaviest and blackest will crawl thus?²³

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 271-272.

Who is the transvaluated redeemer, the one who didn't follow his "Father's will" in tasting of the bitter cup, but instead was one who follows Zarathustra's cry to "bite it"? The shepherd becomes transformed, transfigured in fact, as he listened to Zarathustra's cry:

The shepherd . . . bit as my cry counseled him; he bit with a good bite. Far away he spewed the head of the snake—and he jumped up. No longer shepherd, no long human—one changed, radiant, *laughing!*²⁴

Nietzsche describes the proto-type for becoming divine in a model of living spontaneously and creatively. Nietzsche stands as a transvaluation of the heavy thinkers weighed down by seriousness being lifted up in laughter. Nietzsche presents Zarathustra as a redeemer that does not "Lord" himself over his sheep, giving service in passive resignation, loving those he serves and limiting his potential by denigrating himself in the service of the other. Christianity is not the path to overcoming for Nietzsche. Nietzsche denigrates the Christian soul. This he does in contrast to his view on Christ himself. Nietzsche wrote: "The word 'Christianity' is already a misunderstanding - in reality there has been only one Christian, and he died on the Cross."²⁵

The "most abysmal thought," I argue, resonates with Goethe's references to the Realm of the Mothers. This is a reference to a feminine with real power, majesty and depth. It is one that stands in contrast to the banality of the eternal feminine current in Nietzsche's time. It is perhaps through what Nietzsche meant when referring to his

²⁴ Ibid., 272.

²⁵ Nietzsche, "The Anti-Christ," in *The Twilight of the Idols and the Anti-Christ: or How to Philosophize With a Hammer* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1990) 125.

“thoughts and the thoughts behind of my thoughts”²⁶ that one may begin to understand notions of the feminine divine that had relevance in his time as well as today. The reference to thoughts “behind” thoughts implies a “return” both chronologically as well as ontologically, or in other words it refers to both a prior in terms of history as well as a prior in terms of human perception. This prior time suggests a return to the maternal realm, to the earth as the womb, as well as a return to the origin of each and every thought, feeling, or perception.

Nietzsche’s twosomeness, of being in solitude as well as community, mountain tops/nature as well as the city, male as well as female, he integrates into a single beginning before a beginning. It is a beginning akin to Rosenzweig’s beginnings, arising not from a transcendent above, but from the womb and ground from which all arise. It reflects a beginning in a multidimensional sense, including time and being. This is a time that is lost in seeking some essentialized eternal “truth” of/as “origin.” It is that quality of seeking a final answer for, and explanation of, all of existence that Nietzsche depicts in the heaviness leading Christian saints to become beasts of burden.

Zarathustra is not able to pry the snake out of shepherd’s mouth; he instead remains torn between his countenance and heart, “willing” himself to give and to love. The transfigured shepherd over-flows . . . with laughter. Upon my reading it functions in terms feminist theorists Hélène Cixous will later refer to as the “Laugh of the Medusa.”²⁷ It is an overflowing that provides Nietzsche with the spur toward overcoming:

²⁶ Ibid., 271.

²⁷ Hélène Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa,” trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs* 1, no. 4 (1976): 875-93.

Never yet on earth has a human being laughed as he laughed! O my brothers, I heard a laughter that was no human laughter; and now a thirst gnaws at me, a longing that never grows still. My longing for this laughter gnaws at me; oh, how do I bear to go on living! And how could I bear to die now!²⁸

Nietzsche's moment at the gateway toward overcoming embodies Rosenzweig's notion of a mystical union with the all. Nietzsche may not have approached such a union through the parameters of the confines of faith in a Father God who encourages his sheep to sleep rather than prodding them toward overcoming. Nietzsche was able to provide a more radical reversal of previous thinking and faith. For again, in Zarathustra's example of one who moves beyond dualisms, beyond good and evil, he attains a "nondual" experience. It is this very experience of non-duality that I extrapolate upon, and distinguish as a characteristic of the feminine divine. I will be moving toward a more thorough articulation of this experience as I later explore it as offering a unique vista with which to view the world.

The time and place of nonduality presents itself as a new dimension, one the western mind and psyche has to date not fully incorporated into its cultural awareness. This seemingly new and enlightened avenue with which to view the world cannot be considered as a something totally new, however: it instead adds a quality to human perception that allows one to view more of what is already present. The nondual experience in this way functions, as I will demonstrate, in and as the recognition of the feminine divine. I suggest a recognition of it as the "source" of all life, and can help open up an awareness of more of what it is to be human and also what is possible in "becoming divine." It is this notion of the feminine divine that I suggest Nietzsche initiates; he

²⁸ Ibid., 272.

provides the clarion call for the higher men to be able to move closer to this gate or avenue toward the feminine divine.

This non-dual perception resonates with Nietzsche's notion of the third metamorphosis. Rather than being stuck in the state of negation as Nietzsche's lion, willing only to say no to the past, he overcomes negation. Kierkegaard's knight of infinite resignation is perhaps not unrelated to Nietzsche's camel stage of his second metamorphosis. Going through the stage of negation in Nietzsche's second metamorphosis as a lion, akin to Rosenzweig's suggestion to move from Nought to nonNought, only then to enter Rosenzweig's gate, transitioning to Nietzsche's third metamorphosis as a child. This stage more resembles Kierkegaard's knight of faith, rather than a William James's "will to believe." Such a will to believe Nietzsche may relegate to a deadening of life within the parameters of Christianity, following Paul, then the Nicene Creed, where Christ as *Übermensch* becomes a Christian as "last man."

Through theology, Christ's moment of transfiguration turns into a dogmatic creed developed not through life experience but in long and drawn out thought and debate. Such a will to believe Nietzsche finds to be a detriment to his age, coming as it does from a place of negation, the Nought, or infinite resignation. Nietzsche instead finds an impetus and motivation for life coming not from restrained repression of passion but instead from the Will to Power, as "the unexhausted procreative will of life."²⁹

Will to Power as the Feminine Divine

Nietzsche associates the will to power with his particular approach to redemption. Nietzsche depicts redemption in ways similar to Rosenzweig, that is of focusing not on

²⁹ Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 226.

some essentialized notion of being, but rather on what Nietzsche described as the Will to Power. Even as Rosenzweig views the source of redemption only in the Divine All, Nietzsche, as I have shown, turns instead to a different type of divine, the feminine divine. I associate the Will to Power with a feminine divine.

Alphonso Lingis describes Nietzsche's will to power as *life*:

What do we mean when we say that life is Will to Power? What do we mean by a powerful life? Just what are the powers of life? Let us take these questions not in the sense of the metaphysical question "what is . . . ?," but rather the genealogical question 'who is. . . ?' Who, then, are powers? This properly Nietzschean question leads us into the Nietzschean kind of genealogical interpretation of that interpretation of all beings that is the Will to Power; this question aims not at a metaphysical essence but at determining the quality of the Will to Power.³⁰

Lingis addresses the question concerning the difference between Rosenzweig's All of the philosophers and a Divine all. Lingis provides an analysis of how Nietzsche may address the difference:

The ground [as the 'original All'], then, the reason and the foundation for a sequence of ever divergent appearances is unity. The self-identical that recurs. Unity is the origin of being: the different is the derived. A thing, metaphysically understood, is a unity that recurs across time, that reiterates itself across time and space and, in doing so, generates a sequence of differing appearances of itself.³¹

Furthermore, Lingis expresses Nietzsche's One, as

exist[ing] in repetition, reiterating itself, recurring. It is thus the source of the world. The world is the show, the exhibition, of ever different and ever similar beings generated by a ground, a force of unique Being.

Lingis very directly presents a potential difference between Rosenzweig's and Nietzsche's One. This difference shows how Nietzsche may have agreed with

³⁰ Alphonso Lingis, "The Will to Power," in *The New Nietzsche*, ed. David B. Allison (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995) 45.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 40.

Rosenzweig, yet then gone beyond him. Lingis states as much, in referring to Nietzsche's critique of western religion, but also German idealism:

In the Christian epoch the One, source of the world, ground of all existence and of all intelligibility, was equated with the God of Jewish monotheism. In the modern epoch it is identified with the ego. The transcendental ego is the self-existence, the pole of unity that recurs across time that identifies itself in all its experiences; as such, it is the source and foundation, the ground, of the reality that unfolds about it.

In this passage Lingis is able to explore more directly how Nietzsche's Will to Power is akin to the feminine divine: ". . . [To] affirm that the ground is Will to Power means that the ground is not identity, the One, but original difference. We have in Nietzsche a thought that is not persuaded by the immemorial metaphysical thesis that similitude presupposes identity . . ." This is an origin of being as beginning that not only heralds God as dead, but functions within the environment of a lost father god. For it is not any and every God that is dead, but the "God of monotheism, the monotheistic God." It is true that "the Gods have died." Yet it is as Lingis points out: "They have died of laughter upon hearing the Jewish god claim to be the sole god."³²

All the references to going under to go over appear to build Zarathustra's character in becoming a unique type of redeemer for an age with no "Father" God. Zarathustra is not a redeemer in the manner in which Christians turned Christ the man into a Savior, a redeemer, a Messiah. Zarathustra is a redeemer who can "face" the notion of transience as a feminine divine of the "Realm of the Mothers," not of "the Eternal-Feminine."

³² Ibid.

In his section “On Redemption,” Nietzsche writes of the Will to Power in terms of redemption. After Zarathustra speaks to the hunchback, “and to those whose mouthpiece and advocate the hunchback was,” Zarathustra states:

Verily, my friends, I walk among men as among the fragments and limbs of men. This is what is terrible for my eyes, that I find man in ruins and scattered as over a battlefield or a butcher-field. And when my eyes flee from the now to the past, they always find the same: fragments and limbs and dreadful accidents—but no human beings.³³

Zarathustra becomes the redeemer, but he is a redeemer that finds the strength for overcoming not in a transcendent divine, but instead in the Will to Power with those higher men who have the potential to follow Zarathustra in overcoming.

Nietzsche is placing the source of creativity and divinity within the human realm; Zarathustra is one who is able to lead the way to Nietzsche’s particular promised land:

I walk among men as among the fragments of the future—that future which I envisage. And this is all my creating and striving, that I create and carry together into [the] One what is fragment and riddle and dreadful accident. And how could I bear to be a man if man were not also a creator and guesser of riddles and redeemer of accidents.³⁴

Zarathustra is one that heralds Nietzsche’s notion of *amor fati*: “to redeem those who lived in the past and to recreate all ‘it was’ into a ‘thus I willed it’—that alone should I call redemption.”³⁵ Later in Part Three Nietzsche again has Zarathustra connect the notion of *amor fati* with overcoming or becoming *Übermensch*:

I taught them all *my* creating and striving, to create and carry together into One what in man is fragment and riddle and dreadful accident; as creator, guesser of riddles, and redeemer of accidents, I taught them to work on the future and to redeem with their creation all that *has been*. To redeem what is past in man and

³³ Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 250.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 251.

³⁵ Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 251.

to re-create all 'it was' until the will says, 'Thus I willed it! Thus I shall will it' -- this I called redemption³⁶

This redemption involves descending to the depths I associate with the feminine divine.

Nietzsche had been thinking about his notion of the eternal recurrence from a moment he refers to in his *Ecce Homo*:

The fundamental conception of this work, the idea of the eternal recurrence, this highest formula of affirmation that is at all attainable, belongs in August 1881: It was penned on a sheet with the notation underneath, '6000 feet beyond man and time.' That day I was walking through the woods along the lake of Silvaplana; at a powerful pyramidal rock not far from Surlei I stopped. It was then that this idea came to me.³⁷

It may not be inconsequential that the particular shape of the rock had an impact on Nietzsche. It was in the shape of a pyramid, which for Nietzsche most certainly would have evoked ancient Egypt, a provocation I will allude to in chapter four regarding a longing for a return to a primordial feminine associated with Egypt.

Nietzsche continues with a reference to Egypt when he describes "an omen a[s] a sudden and profoundly decisive change in my taste." This turning point Nietzsche associates with Zarathustra and states it "may be reckoned as music; certainly a rebirth of the art of *hearing* was among its preconditions." Furthermore, he describes the significance of this *moment* using imagery that connotes and evokes ancient Egypt:

In a small mountain spa not far from Vicenza, Recoaro, where I spent the spring of 1881, I discovered together with my maestro and friend, Peter Gast, who was also 'reborn,' that the phoenix of music flew past us with lighter and more brilliant feathers than it had ever displayed before.

Nietzsche describes the moment of transformation or rebirth utilizing Egyptian symbolism of the phoenix. The phoenix in ancient Egyptian culture is associated with

³⁶ Ibid., 310.

³⁷ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 295.

death and resurrection, with becoming consumed by fire, and rising out of the ashes to be reborn. This reference attains greater significance when noting that Nietzsche associates the “moment” with becoming impregnated with and giving birth to what would become Zarathustra eighteen months later:

But if I reckon forward from that day to the sudden birth that occurred in February 1883 under the most improbable of circumstances . . . we get eighteen months for the pregnancy. This figure of precisely eighteen months might suggest, at least to a Buddhist, that I am really a female elephant.³⁸

Just as Rosenzweig following him associates eastern philosophy with what I identify as a type of feminine wisdom, Nietzsche here too makes a connection between his experience of the creative process and a feminine divine. Accordingly so, if the path to overcoming involves integrating all of life in terms that relate with a feminine divine, it is significant that Nietzsche attributed ideas concerning the creative process in writing Zarathustra to a woman.

In the Beginning . . . Was Andreas-Salomé’s “A Prayer to Life”

Nietzsche proclaims the notion of *amor fati*, the primary characteristic of the *Übermensch*, that is to love all of life, even that which is painful, or rather to will even all pain backwards to, as he describes it, a “something else [that] also belongs in this interval: The “Hymn to Life.” This reference alludes to the poem “A Prayer to Life,” written by Lou Andreas-Salomé. In noting this reference, a tantalizing possibility comes to the fore, that is of noting as well Nietzsche’s association with Andreas-Salomé as it appears to mirror some of his philosophical understandings.

³⁸ Ibid.

Nietzsche describes Andreas-Salomé's poem "A Prayer to Life" as "attain[ing] greatness." He writes of what "may be reckoned as music"³⁹ accompanying the words, as they arise from his new-found rebirth of Zarathustra. Nietzsche writes of the poem: "Whoever can find any meaning at all in the last words of the poem will guess why I preferred and admired it Pain is *not* considered an objection to life: 'If you have not more happiness to give me, well then! *you still have suffering*'."⁴⁰

Nietzsche provides a transvaluation of western religion and thought, yet it is Andreas-Salomé that composed the words to the poem/hymn. Her poem reads as Psalm #88, the only psalm that does not end in finding a peaceful and loving resolution of life's difficulties in God. Psalm #88 reads:

But unto thee have I cried, O Lord; and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee
Lord, why castest thou off my soul? Why hidest thou thy face from me?
I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up: while I suffer thy terrors I am distracted.
Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off.
They came round about me daily like water; they compassed me about together.
Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness.

Andreas-Salomé's "Prayer to Life" also provides no hope or resolution of life's difficulties in God. The aim is not to praise, blame, or cajole God. Instead the "Hymn to Life" focuses on a type of redemption based on accepting suffering/pain.

This is a pivotal moment for Nietzsche, as it captures his notion of *amor fati*. It was at this moment that Nietzsche made an attempt for greatness in composing music to

³⁹ Ibid., 295.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 297.

accompany Andreas-Salomé's writing. The notion of accepting fate, all of fate, even pain, he attributes to Andreas-Salomé:

Indeed, I love you life, as friend
Loves friend, in all your mystery—
Whether I wept or laughed again,
Whether you brought me joy or pain.

I love you even for the harm you do;
And if you must destroy me,
I'll tear myself away from you
As I would leave a friend.

I embrace you with all my might!
Let your flames set me on fire,
And in the glow of that last fight
I will explore your riddle's depths.

To be for centuries! to live!
Wrap your arms about me once again:
If you have no more joy to give—
At least you still grant pain.⁴¹

During this time Nietzsche writes of “a scarcely trivial symptom of my condition during that year when the “Yes-saying” pathos par excellence which I call the tragic pathos, was live in me to the highest degree.” Nietzsche praises this work as most movingly capturing his being and thought. He declares in *Ecce Homo*: “The time will come when it will be sung in my memory.”⁴²

Even though Nietzsche may have gotten the initial idea for the eternal recurrence at an earlier moment in time, it was not until after he met Lou Andreas-Salomé that he conceived of the connection between the eternal recurrence, *amor fati*, and the

⁴¹ Andreas-Salomé included the poem in her *Memoirs*, adding an editorial note: “Once I wrote it down from memory for Nietzsche and he set it to music in more solemn, slightly longer lines.” See Lou Andreas-Salomé, *Looking Back* (New York: Marlowe & Company, 1995) 21.

⁴² Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 296.

Übermensch. Given the context Nietzsche calls forth concerning his writing of *Zarathustra* in *Ecce Homo*, that of pregnancy, re-birth, pro-creativity, life, and redemption, one may do the math and find it compelling that it was roughly nine months after Nietzsche and Andreas-Salome were together that Nietzsche was able to write Part One of *Zarathustra*.⁴³

I will later refer to Lou Andreas-Salome's writings as she was influenced by as well as influenced Nietzsche. Nietzsche had hopes that Andreas-Salomé would be his disciple as Plato was to Socrates. She seemed in many ways unable to fulfill this role for him. It is through a unique re-reading of *Zarathustra*, however, that includes some of Andreas-Salomé's thoughts on impermanence and her influence on Nietzsche's notion of *amor fati*, that I suggest she was in fact a most loyal disciple. Or perhaps her role in his life and writings, at least as far as Nietzsche was concerned, resembled the role that Diotima plays in Plato's *Symposium*: Arising from the realm of the mothers and offering the highest teachings on love. But, in a reversal, it could also be the case that Nietzsche was in many ways Andreas-Salomé's disciple. What is for certain is that just as there was confusion over whether Plato's texts were the product of Socrates or Plato own

⁴³ Nietzsche finished the last lines of the first part of *Zarathustra* on the day that Richard Wagner died: Feb. 13, 1883. Both Lou Andreas-Salomé and Nietzsche write of a most memorable day in their brief time together, on May 5, 1882, nine months earlier, when they had visited Sacro Monte together, near Orta in the lake region of northern Italy. Of this event Andreas-Salomé wrote that Nietzsche said: "Sacro Monte—I thank you for the most exquisite dream of my life!" Andreas-Salomé herself recalled from the outing: "I no longer recall whether I kissed Nietzsche on Sacro Monte or not." Andreas-Salomé, *Memoirs*, p. 167.

thoughts, so too is there some confusion as to the source of some of Nietzsche's key concepts.

Furthermore, I will present an argument that in many ways Andreas-Salomé is able to provide a sustainable critique of western philosophy and theology in a manner that not only applied to her own age, but also provides insight into contemporary philosophy and theology in providing a more systematic approach to a feminine divine for an age that has lost their Father God. Not only does Andreas-Salomé delineate a most insightful analysis concerning the history of philosophy and theology in her essay "Jesus the Jew," in her essay "The Consequences of the Fact That it Was Not Women Who Killed the Father" she also explores aspects of the psyche concerning the lost mother, both in her own writing, but also in regard to Nietzsche's perspective on her. Andreas-Salomé's writings on the death drive and narcissism as well as another of her texts "The Erotic" provides a bridge between Nietzsche and Rosenzweig and Freud and some French feminist psychoanalytic theorists. Not only does Andreas-Salomé provide a bridge to more contemporary approaches to Nietzsche and the feminine divine, but as I suggest in chapter four, she helps in articulating a feminine divine that goes beyond contemporary feminist philosophical and theological discourses.

Chapter Four:
Remembering the Feminine Divine:
“Mother God is alive. Mother God remains alive. We will remember her.”

‘Where is my mother,’ he said. ‘I do not see her anywhere. I will go and look for her’, . . . “I have a mother,’ said the baby bird. ‘I will find her, I will I will . . .’

P. D. Eastman¹

*Mother is gone,
Only Things remain.
So be it*

Denise Levertov²

Although the Grandmother has disappeared, the crinoline has nonetheless remained.

Siegfried Kracauer³

[The] substitution of “Mother God” for “Father God,” while leaving the concept of God otherwise the same (“God in a skirt”), it itself does not change very much.

Grace Jantzen⁴

In beginning to formulate a return of the feminine divine as it arises in Rosenzweig’s and Nietzsche’s text, and then more thoroughly in the works of some French feminist psychoanalytic theorists, I return to inquire into the meaning of becoming divine in the history of western theology and philosophy of religion. The immediate question arises: What does it mean for a woman to “become divine”?

¹ P. D. Eastman. *Are You My Mother?* (New York, NY: Random House for Young Readers, 1960), 5-9.

² “The Film.” Dictionary.com. Columbia World of Quotations. Columbia University Press, 1996. http://quotes.dictionay.com/he_walks_with_me_to_the_gate_of (accessed: May 19, 2011).

³ Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 61.

⁴ Grace Jantzen, *Becoming Divine: Toward a Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press), 267.

Although Rosenzweig and Nietzsche may not have addressed the topic explicitly in their writings, there is nonetheless a clear understanding in their texts that any approach to apotheosis, including becoming divine *as*, but also *through*, a feminine divine, must come about as embodied being. Rosenzweig and Nietzsche reiterate the need for a careful consideration of how philosophical understandings impact individuals' actual *gendered* lives. They would not support the use of conceptual thinking, therefore, including a potentially ultimate focus on apotheosis, in terms of genderless transcendent abstractions.

In addressing the question of "becoming" divine as it relates to Rosenzweig's and Nietzsche's philosophical writings, it is significant to note the different definitions of the word *becoming*. When used as an adjective, the word becoming describes an object as being suitable, as giving a pleasing effect, or as being attractive in appearance. The adjectival use of the word becoming is a matter of the divine coming to be beautiful, in the sense of a *becoming* becoming. When a woman appears as *a becoming* divine, then she manifests the appealing features which seem suitable for a divine being. However one may also view her becoming divine as a verb, this would be a becoming that involves the divination of the feminine, as a realization of a potentiality in a movement from a lower level to a higher level of actuality. In relation to apotheosis, this latter approach is arguably one proto-type for becoming divine that Rosenzweig's and Nietzsche's writings open the way for in the history of western philosophy.⁵ Rosenzweig and Nietzsche both

⁵ Kantian aesthetic theory may help elaborate the distinction between the two types of becoming: the former type of female becoming divine is reminiscent of what Kant would call the beautiful, alluding to her position as an object to be admired or desired; the latter type of becoming divine is associated with the sublime, alluding to her position as a speaking subject and arbiter of desire. Kant himself writes of the terms beautiful and sublime in gendered terms with the female as being more akin to the beautiful and the

view human insight and development in evolutionary terms. Their writings suggest a means by which humans may grow in their abilities as human beings, perhaps, as I assert, toward a type of redeemed life.

Furthermore, regarding the notion of apotheosis within the context of Jewish and Christian religious traditions, one may also ask: How can humans be created in God's image, at least according to religious traditions that include the creation stories contained with the Book of Genesis, and not be like him or her? If there is indeed a feminine divine, then at least as far back as Platonic idealism in the history of western philosophy, it follows that one's earthly mother must be based on some supreme or ideal prototype of heavenly motherhood. Yet, for the most part in mainstream Judaism and Christianity there continues to be resistance to the notion not only of a feminine divine, but also of a conception of an embodied god. There is a western, especially Platonic resistance against the "body" in favor of the disembodied "soul." The rejection of the feminine divine goes hand in hand with the identification of the female with the body and "nature" which gives the soul/spirit/mind the status of the supernatural, and thus dominance over nature and the body. It follows that an erasure of a feminine divine in the history of Judaism and Christianity coincides with the erasure of embodied divinity.⁶

As there was a forgetting of the feminine divine in the history of western theology and philosophy of religion, attempts to recover her reflect the well-known account in

male having attributes more related to the sublime. See Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960).

⁶ For an attempt to grapple with the inherent tensions that arise with a gendered (male) and thus anthropomorphic God in the Jewish tradition, see Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, *God's Phallus and Other Problems for Men and Monotheism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* of the *fort/da* game. Freud describes the game as one a male child (whom later scholars identified as his grandson Ernst) plays when his mother is gone for a period of time. The game involves picking up an object and throwing it out of sight and saying the word "*fort*," the German word for forth or away. The child then retrieves the lost toy and says "*da*," the German word for there. Freud is able to identify this game as bringing solace to the young child, who appears to experience anxiety with the temporary loss of his mother. The child repeats the game over and over.

This repetitive compulsive behavior functions as a form of melancholy; through a longing to fill a void the child reacts to the loss of the mother in a manner that is beyond his rational control rather than directly "facing" the absent mother. In his 1917 essay "Mourning and Melancholy" Freud juxtaposes his notion of melancholy with that of mourning, the former he describes as pathological and the latter as normal. If little Ernst were to face the loss/emptiness directly, realizing that his mother is in fact gone, he may in a sense mourn her loss in order to heed the "call of reality" to let go of the beloved lost object, thus liberating libidinal desire to be able to love an other. He would then fully heal from the loss/trauma, and as a consequence refrain from further compulsive and repetitive behavior.

In contrast to mourning, Freud distinguishes melancholy as involving an inability to consciously acknowledge the loss. What happens in the case of the melancholic is that what was lost becomes deposited in the unconscious; a melancholic would then react with resistance, or even with violence toward that which threatens the ego. Freud's writings on loss, particularly during World War I, the period of time he was writing

“Mourning and Melancholy,” offer a means by which to evaluate theological and societal approaches to the loss of a mother God and the subsequent consequences of this loss in the realm of religion in general.

Fort! Are You My Mother?

In her book *Becoming Divine: Toward a Feminist Philosophy of Religion* Feminist philosopher Grace Jantzen notes how throughout the history of western philosophy of religion and theology, God is male. Following Irigaray’s generative text “Divine Woman,” Jantzen points out that when women in western religious traditions seek to “become divine” they have no maternal model to emulate. Western religious thought has helped form as well as continues to influence the Western psyche and culture. Throughout the history of Western theology and philosophy there has not been a Mother God for women to identify with and/or emulate, nor for a man to accept and integrate into his sense of divinity/perfection. There is no image or iconic representation of the divine mother, nor--as I will explore below--is there a recognition of the maternal presence as it is associated with the most “primal” experience in human life when the child has no sense of separation from the mother in the early months of infancy. As I demonstrate, the two are related.

According to a psychoanalytic perspective, the time in the early development of a child’s growing sense of self-hood involves a quasi-mystical state; there are no clear boundaries demarcating self from other. Where everything is considered one in unity with the whole, there exists nothing whatsoever to say, think, or do. It is a time of fullness. Within the context of the “Western” mind, however, this time may be equated not with a fullness or plenitude, but instead with of a loss of self-hood or death. It is as

Rosenzweig's dual notion of the All, one referring to the All of a mystical experience and the other referring to the All as sense of emptiness or nihilism. Death in this sense has been associated with the mother or the maternal realm. As I have shown, through an opening in my reading of Rosenzweig's and Nietzsche's texts, there comes forth an unveiling of what is associated with the maternal: death, birth, nature, pre-history, etc. This something "other" I establish as the gateway through which to enter a feminine divine.

Rosenzweig ascribes the philosophical striving to know "the essence" to the ongoing endeavour to avoid facing death. Both Rosenzweig and Nietzsche draw out the feminine in terms of facing death in order not only to understand but, more importantly, to live life to the full. Avoiding looking backward to one's origin becomes a form of suicide for both figures in their respective approaches to life, philosophy, and the feminine. Both Rosenzweig and Nietzsche assert, at least when read as I am attempting to read them here in this dissertation, that fullness of living can only be found by turning back toward what normally can not be faced directly, or rather that which one cannot face directly, *and live*, at least insofar as one has understood life up till then--that is, face death as it is associated with the feminine divine as the material realm.

I will explore an opening through my reading of Rosenzweig's and Nietzsche's texts, alluding to some of the cultural influences of their time, as an uncovering of an experience of the feminine divine. First I will use psychoanalytic theory to trace the cultural historical context in which to place their entryway into the history of philosophy. I do so in order to help support the truly revolutionary and potentially powerful force of their philosophical understandings. Using a psychoanalytic perspective to explore more

fully how philosophical as well as psychoanalytical understandings evolved from the mid-19th to the early 20th century in Europe will set the stage to profit from Rosenzweig's and Nietzsche's legacy in bringing to light a rejuvenated feminist philosophy of religion.

The result will be an approach to a feminist philosophy of religion that is not created ex nihilo, but is reformulated through mining the past for insights to recreate a philosophy for the present and future. In such an approach, the feminist philosophy of religion would no longer try to move forward based on what has presumably been lost in the western psyche, but instead would function to uncover and realize the true origin of being from that which, it turns out, we never really left: the maternal realm as the feminine divine.

In order to explore a "lack" of the feminine divine, in either representations, or even acknowledgements, of a Mother God in western theology, philosophy of religion, and culture, initially Lou Andreas-Salome, then subsequently French psychoanalyst scholars such as Kristeva, Cixous, and Irigaray, offer insights indicating that Western religion arises not from the Oedipal Complex or death of the father, as in classic Freudian theory, but from the loss of the mother, or, rather, from never really dealing with the *fear* of such loss.

Diane Jonte-Pace argues for a counter-thesis to Freud's "master thesis," which is cast in terms, as Jonte-Pace puts it, of an "Oedipal paradigm, characterized by death wishes for fathers and by erotic desires for mothers."⁷ Instead of associating death with the father, Jonte-Pace suggests a counter-thesis: ". . . God, mothers, mortality, and

⁷ Diane Jonte-Pace, "At Home in the Uncanny: Freudian Representations of Death, Mothers, and the Afterlife." *Journal of American Academy of Religion* 64, no. 1 (1996): 61.

immortality appear as interlocking topics, which Freud was unable to confine within a narrative of father-murder and mother-love. Often interruptive and subversive, this counter-thesis haunts Freud's psychology of religion, as if to challenge the dominance of the Oedipal paradigm."⁸

Certain of Jonte-Pace's directives not only help illuminate Freud's writings, but are also suggestive of making a slight but significant variation of a famous feminist dictum: changing the slogan that "the personal is political" into "the personal is cultural." Not only does Freud's viewpoint reflect his personal biography, but it is also a product, as well as a producer, of Western culture. With that in mind, we can return to Freud's last and perhaps most perplexing text, *Moses and Monotheism*, in order to provide a fresh reading of some core issues of that text by viewing it through the lens of Jonte-Pace's "counter thesis." Doing so will allow us to explore some hidden territory, providing insight into how a strictly Freudian psychoanalysis might not only obscure, but might also be used to help bring insight, into the loss of the mother in western theology and philosophy of religion.

Again, one thing reading *Moses and Monotheism* through what Diane Jonte-Pace identifies as her counter-thesis associating death with the mother, correcting what she identifies as Freud's "master thesis" associating death with the father, does is to open a view on Freud's work and thinking as a man representative of his time and culture. In what follows, I offer a commentary on Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* to support my argument that he functions as representative of Western thinking during his own time as

⁸ Ibid., 62.

well as today in not being able to face and accept the loss of the divine mother in the history of Judaism, and likewise in the history of western thought/life in general.

In *Moses and Monotheism* Freud advances two crucial claims he views as controversial: 1) Moses was an Egyptian; 2) Moses was killed by his followers. Freud found through his reading of the scriptural texts at issue that there were parapraxis or signs/symptoms of a pathology or trauma evident in the Hebrew Bible, a trauma which he argues is that of a murder. He interprets such textual parapraxis and other forms of textual deviance and divergence as follows: “The distortion of a text is not unlike a murder. The difficulty lies not in the execution of the deed but in the doing away with the traces.”⁹ Additionally Freud indicated “two distinct forces, diametrically opposed to each other” that “have left their traces on [the text], falsifying the text in accord with secret tendencies, maiming and extending it until it was turned into its opposite.” He speaks of one force extending to the place of the other, functioning as “an indulgent piety reign[ing] over it, anxious to keep everything as it stood, indifferent to whether the details fitted together or nullified one another.” He then describes evidence of the conflicting forces in the Biblical text itself: “. . . Almost everywhere there can be found striking omissions, disturbing repetition, palpable contradictions, signs of things the communication of which was never intended.”

Freud’s chosen narrative to provide context for the trauma was the murder of the father, he reasons from the Oedipal paradigm based on “totemic religion” where brothers gathered to kill their father. According to that underlying claim, one can easily see the logic and derivation of the second point above, that Moses’ followers killed him.

⁹ Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1939), 70.

However, the first point, that Moses was an Egyptian, does not seem to follow as clearly. Why would Moses as “father” of the Jews not really be a Jew at all, but an Egyptian instead, a member of a people contemporary Egyptologist Jan Assmann describes as playing, in the Western historical imagination, the role of the “rejected, discarded, and abandoned.”¹⁰ In other words, why would Freud associate Moses with the pre-historical maternal realm? Clearly, Egypt, in its role as the cradle of civilization, represents pre-history, or the pre-oedipal realm for Freud. This accords with the idea of Egypt functioning, as Assmann points out using Julia Kristeva’s terminology, as an “abject” civilization.

Even though the real loss/murder was not of the father God, but of the feminine divine or mother God, Freud did not acknowledge this. Instead his only recourse to explain the troubling narrative lacunae he has identified as symptomatic of trauma was, again, to fall back into his seeming obsession with the Oedipal complex. He explores the point in his earlier *Totem and Taboo* where Freud argues that in primitive societies, the brothers/sons rise up to kill the father. Freud thereby surmises a convoluted plot that culminates in the murder of Moses, the father, by his followers, the sons. With regard to the question of how Freud came up with such a convoluted narrative plot to explain away the pathological anomalies in the text that he takes to be indicative of trauma, and/or to be signs of guilt manifest in textual evidence of masking or attempting to cover over a crime, I would suggest it may be Freud’s own account that functions to reinforce the

¹⁰ Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1997), 208-9.

Biblical text in covering over a very different “crime.” This is a crime in which the true murder being masked is the murder, not of the father, but of the divine mother.

Although it is well established that Freud had extensive correspondence with Lou Andreas-Salomé, there seems to be no explicit recognition on his part, at least to the extent that it comes up in his later writing, of some of her interpretive analysis concerning the topic. In relation to the loss of a past “matriarchy,” Peter Davis refers to Andreas-Salomé as in fact recognizing an alternative reading to Freud’s approach. In regard to Freud’s approach to taboo, Andreas-Salomé writes the following, as Davis notes:

With regard to the short essay ‘The Taboo of Virginity’ it occurred to me that this taboo may have been intensified by the fact that at one time (in a matriarchal society) the woman may have been the dominant partner. In this way, like the defeated deities, she acquired demonic properties, and was feared as an agent of retribution. Also her defloration by deity, priests, etc. points back to a time when she was not ‘private property’ of the male, and in order to achieve this she had to shake off the shackles of her impressive past – which may still play its part as the earliest positive basis for the precautionary measure against the male.

Davies draws this conclusion:

Rather than the Darwinian primal horde with its dominant father murdered and devoured by his sons, Andreas-Salomé suggests that a matriarchal cultural phase has a significant influence on psychological phenomena, rather than simply being an incidental phase of transition.¹¹

With this idea in mind, it is worth noting that until his own death Freud continued to be haunted and perplexed by *Moses and Monotheism*. Just as he found evidence of a trauma--a murder--in the lacunae of the Biblical text, so too is there a general consensus in the secondary literature that *Moses and Monotheism* itself also contained distortions. Thus, as one scholar puts it, “The text of *Moses and Monotheism* seems to reflect the

¹¹ Peter Davies, *Myth, Matriarchy and Modernity: Johann Jakob Bachofen in German Culture. 1860-1945* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 232.

difficulties Freud experienced while composing it. It is riddled with apologies, hesitations, repetitions.”¹²

Interestingly, just as Freud appears to have struggled in composing his own text, so too do some authors of commentary on that Freudian text likewise express experiencing a type of troubling haunting concerning the topic addressed in that text. For example, Richard J. Bernstein notes that he shared with Jan Assmann an experience of angst in composing his own writings on *Moses and Monotheism*: “Assmann tells us that once he started writing his book, he could not set it aside to work on other projects until he had completed his final draft. He speaks of the Moses discourse as having a life of its own.” Bernstein concludes: “I too have experienced this compelling power.”¹³

Freud’s notion of “the uncanny” can be applied to such a troubling haunting of angst. In utilizing a type of counter thesis to Freud’s own master thesis in reading *Moses and Monotheism*, one can argue that writing on such topics would be certain to evoke a sense of the uncanny as occurs when what should have been covered over or repressed somehow becomes manifest despite all the efforts to hide it. Along those very lines, Freud himself refers to “Schiller’s definition of the uncanny as something which ought to have remained hidden, but has come to light.”¹⁴

Freud’s two-page psychoanalytical critique of the Greek myth “Medusa’s Head” further reflects as well as helps shape the assumed masculinist approach to the mother in relation to the uncanny. Due to the castration complex, one (who is male) is simply not

¹² Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Freud’s Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1991), 6.

¹³ Richard J. Bernstein, preface to *Freud and the Legacy of Moses* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), xi.

¹⁴ Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny,” *S.E.* 17:241.

able to look directly, or to “face” the lack (of a phallus, or the cultural representation of a masculinist culture). Freud’s discusses the uncanny in a manner that relates to Medusa’s Head: “There is something uncanny about the female genital organs. This unheimlich place, however, is the entrance to the former Heim [home] of all human beings, to the place where each one of us lived once upon a time and in the beginning. . . . In this case, . . . the unheimlich is what was once heimlich, familiar; the prefix ‘un’ is the token of repression.”¹⁵

Freud indicates there is within the western andocentric culture he was a part of a most deeply imbedded terror of looking at the female body. The terror arises because of the castration anxiety, yet another fear stems from the lack representing the loss of the mother in western psyche and culture. Freud himself appeared not able to face this loss directly and again in many ways his brilliance as a thinker, “scientist,” and certainly writer was in his ability to write texts that appear to function as mythopoetic. This type of text, which includes his commentary on Medusa’s Head, functions as a speculum or mirror one may use in providing *indirect* exposure to a truth too traumatic to face directly. The text as speculum/mirror veils a truth too devastating to face while at the same time it provides access to it. It is through a speculum, through interpretation, that one may come to face a truth not accessible to the ordinary eye. The imagery here helps to substantiate using psychoanalytic theory in order to come to face a feminine divine. Expanding further the reading of *Moses and Monotheism* through the lens of Jonte-Pace’s counter-thesis also brings to light some aspects of the western perspective on the beginnings of Monotheism. The Hebrew Tradition brought with it the notion of

¹⁵ Ibid., 245.

monotheism: one male Father God. Through what, following Assmann, we may identify as ‘normative inversion,’ when that which comes before is “rejected, discarded, and abandoned,” there appears to be a disparaging of Egyptian culture in play here. The process of normative inversion indicates that when something comes into being, it must necessarily wipe out what came before.

According to this paradigm then, Freud would assumably regard Egypt as inferior, precisely because of its association with the maternal realm. Yet, he exhibits a type of crossover structure through his claim that Moses was not Jewish, but Egyptian. By Freud’s reconstruction, Moses was not of lowly birth, and only adopted into Egyptian royalty, who subsequently returns to his own people to lead them out of their slavery. Rather, he was actually born into the “higher caste,” someone highborn who later chose to turn around and lead a lowly people. Thus, Freud, writing in the first half of the twentieth century in Europe, offers an additional flip to those already to be found on the surface of the scriptural text: Moses was not of Jewish birth, one of the “chosen people” who reigns over what had come before, taken as being the pre-verbal/pre-oedipal depths of human existence, but was, instead, born an Egyptian and, as such, risen from the maternal realm become abject. He was one of the abject who rises above and comes eventually to turn around and chose to lead the supposed civilized European Jewry into freedom.

Freud’s own “unconscious” haunting by such an anomalous narrative may be indicative of something with potentially far greater significance than his own individual psychic history. It would then be just this significance that plagued Freud and others regarding the topic. It isn’t until and through Lou Andreas-Salomé writing as an early

feminist psychoanalytic theorist and then some French feminist analysts following her that there arises the possibility of a full transvaluation in cross-over structure of human/divine relations. As I will outline later in the chapter, it is through such a reversal that we may begin to articulate a transvaluation of the Father God as being primary.

DA! Finding the Lost Feminine

Another of Freud's texts that helps to illuminate some aspects of what I am arguing for viewing as the repression of a feminine divine presence is *Civilization and Its Discontents*. In it Freud refers to a letter by Romain Rolland describing what Rolland identified as the "true source of religious sentiments," the "oceanic feeling," that is, a "feeling as of something limitless, unbounded—as it were, 'oceanic.'" Freud identified the oceanic feeling with an earlier phase of ego development when "an infant at the breast does not as yet distinguish his ego from the external world as the source of the sensations flowing in upon him."¹⁶ During this time in a child's development there is no sense of separation of the ego from the world around. As Freud puts it: ". . . Originally the ego includes everything, later it separates off an external world from itself. Our present ego-feeling is, therefore, only a shrunken residue of a much more inclusive--indeed, an all-embracing--feeling which corresponded to a more intimate bond between the ego and the world about it."¹⁷

Even though Freud--and later Lacan--reasons that earlier phases of ego development may continue to be present in later stages of development, he does not seem able to allow for the "oceanic feeling" to be a true impetus for religious feeling. Here

¹⁶ Sigmund Freud, "Civilizations and Its Discontents," *S.E.* 21:64.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 68.

again, he turns to his master-thesis in identifying the human tendency to be religious as relating only to a need for God the father and for his protection. Even as Freud was able to assign the “oceanic feeling,” which he admits may exist in many people, to what can be traced back to an early phase of ego-feeling, he is still unable to associate this oceanic feeling, correlated as it is with the mother, with “true” religious sentiment.

Thus, in trying to fit all experience, including, it appears, some aspect of the oceanic feeling clearly related to the infant’s time with her mother, into his master thesis, Freud writes: “The derivation of religious needs from the infant’s helplessness and the longing for the father aroused by it seems to me incontrovertible, especially since the feeling is not simply prolonged from childhood days, but is permanently sustained by fear of the superior power of Fate.” Here Freud seems to connect an infant’s oceanic state in terms not of bliss, plenitude, or enjoyable feelings, but instead as the “need” for, as well as fear of, the father: “I cannot think of any need in childhood as strong as the need for a father’s protection.” He then concludes: “Thus the part played by the oceanic feeling, which might seek something like the restoration of limitless narcissism, is ousted from a place in the foreground.”

Earlier in the text Freud makes it clear in relation to his comparison of the human ego development with the evolution of the city Rome, that “the same space cannot have two different contents.”¹⁸ Nevertheless, even as Freud is attempting to indicate, in the form of a recapitulation, how an earlier phase in the history of western Jewry was not lost, but always remained as a residue or as traces like those left on a “mystic writing pad,” he does not appear able to note an obvious contradiction: Judaism could not inhabit

¹⁸ Ibid., 70-1.

the same space as the earlier, pictorial, pre-historical Egyptian culture. Here too he exhibits an inability to face the loss: Still present in what was “lost” are traces or residue of the Mother or maternal realm in terms associated with God. He indicates as much when he suggests his thought processes have led him down a blind alley: “The origin of the religious attitude can be traced back in clear outlines as far as the feeling of infantile helplessness. There may be something further behind that, but for the present it is wrapped in obscurity.”¹⁹ If there ever were a gap in a text, a lacunae indicating there is something missing, it may be in his words “wrapped in obscurity”; here he demonstrates his inability to explore the oceanic feeling as a time/space of significance in relation to the mother, particularly as divine creator.²⁰

In being representative of his age as well as western culture in general, there is thus manifest in Freud’s own writing a lacuna concerning the maternal realm. The repercussions of thus missing such a crucial aspect of the human psyche, perhaps especially as it concerns a philosophy of religion for the west, calls for a more fleshed out approach to a feminist philosophy of religion. This would be a feminine philosophy of religion that involves a feminine divine not as a “mother substitute” serving to placate the true traumatic murder. Instead it demonstrates the value in seeking a “beginning” of human existence both individually and as a people, in returning to Rosenzweig’s and

¹⁹ Ibid., 72.

²⁰ Additionally it is worth noting that Freud twice states in the text how even though the oceanic feeling may be traceable to earlier phases of ego development, he is certain that this structure cannot be formulated pictorially: “The fact remains that only in the mind is . . . a preservation of all the earlier stages alongside of the final form possible and that we are not in a position to represent this phenomenon in pictorial terms.” Ibid., 71.

Nietzsche's writings as they open the path toward a more integrated approach to divinity, in western religion and life.

Rather than facing the loss, as Rosenzweig and Nietzsche assert to be necessary, what Freud calls the death drive would compel a repetition of the loss/trauma with the accompanying attempt to fill in what was lost: a sense of wholeness. As noted in Freud's reference to little Ernst's game of *fort/da*, or as Lacan's notion of the *objet petit a*, it works as just another attempt to turn outward and try to fill the gap with another object. Certain attempts to retrieve the lost Goddess are facile; they are not helpful in any way other than to provide a temporary fix. They function to support the status quo of patriarchal religion and society in that they focus on conceptual knowledge and language in the spirit of Rosenzweig's *All of the philosopher*, rather than of a sense of vastness/emptiness or infinite potentiality. It would be an example of a becoming divine rather than one of becoming divine.

Many if not most attempts to "retrieve" the lost feminine divine or mother in western religion and culture have remained at such a level of the mother substitute, rather than allowing for the western psyche to face the loss, the lack of the feminine divine in western theology and culture. In facing the Real in Lacanian terms, I argue one may face what can be called the divine mother. The process is not so much a return or recovery, a remembering, but an acknowledgement of the emptiness at the origin of being; this is an origin of being that leads not to nothingness, but to absolute plentitude. This point aligns with the particular nature of the feminine divine uncovered in the cross-reading of Rosenzweig against Nietzsche, and so contextualized it has the potential to supply a unique perspective on a feminine divine in relation to the modern western psyche.

Reiterating Freudian psychoanalytic theory to help demonstrate the point: any attempt to come up with a conception of an one-dimensional Goddess would function as a “mother-substitute” in a manner that reflects not what Freud refers to as mourning, but, instead, melancholy. It would therefore only help further a type of melancholic repetition compulsion in the west, that of not facing the loss of the feminine divine to truly mourn and heal, but instead functioning to try to placate the loss though some imaginary figure. Such a form of worship of the feminine divine would not allow for a true realization of what has been lost/forgotten, but instead further support the status-quo. Coming up with an iconic representation of the feminine divine without first facing her loss in western theology would add to a continuation of a patriarchal and potentially oppressive approach to religious worship. It would be little more than the return of the Goddess as “God in a skirt.”²¹ In effect, then, it is really the loss -- the unacknowledged, un-mourned loss -- of the mother that expresses itself in the Freudian myth of the murder/death of the Father. In my estimation there can be two ways the Feminine divine may come to the fore in western theological traditions: 1) as a mother substitute, or *objet a* function, as in the *fort/da* game where there is an attempt to conceptualize a mother figure to replace the gaping loss/lack with some replica of the original maternal force, or as Jantzen would describe it, “God in a skirt”; 2) as what Helene Cixous might refer to as a laughing Medusa, or Luce Irigaray would define as a woman becoming divine as she may arise to divinity in her own right. In the first of these approaches we find many attempts to

²¹ Grace Jantzen writes of the return of the Goddess “God in a skirt.” She writes: “For women to project a divine horizon, a ‘God according to our gender/genre,’ . . . it is necessary that this female divine [be] thought of in female terms This is why substitution of “Mother God’ for ‘Father God,’ while leaving the concept of God otherwise the same (‘God in a skirt’), in itself does not change very much.” Jantzen, 267.

reclaim, or remember the lost mother in western culture by turning to pre-historical, “Goddess culture.”²² The second turns to explore what Freud was not able to do in his writings, but that, I am arguing, Rosenzweig and Nietzsche read through one another, as I am attempting to do, make possible.

I will shortly make use Julia Kristeva’s reference to the semiotic *chora* to provide a bridge of sorts between western psychoanalytical as well as metaphysical perspectives. In addition, Luce Irigaray’s recent text *Between East and West: From Singularity to Community* shows a turn to eastern thought. In it she utilizes eastern perspectives and traditions not just to study, but as a practice, in a manner that may enable women in general not just to study about the feminine divine, but also, following Rosenzweig’s and Nietzsche’s approaches to philosophy as life, to *become* it.

In reference to the first manner of return of the mother in western theology and philosophy of religion, I have suggested efforts to replace the lost mother do little more than cover over the true loss of the feminine divine with a decoy of the security of a comfortable mother substitute. It would be another attempt at mastery, as Anne-Claire Mulder makes clear in her description of Freud’s “*fort/da*” game as “motivated by the ‘*Bemächtigungstrieb*,’ the instinct or drive to master: the drive to master a situation; in this case the drive to master (the presence and absence of) [Ernst’s] mother.”²³ Significantly, rather than deal with the profundity of the original loss, these traditions

²² For a critique of the historically tenuous nature of the Goddess movement rediscovering an idealized past see Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Goddess and the Feminine divine: A Western Religious History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). Just as Ruether questions the tenability of some utopian matriarchy in history, so too would I question the tenability of a utopian primordial oneness filled with bliss.

²³ Ibid., 79.

instead use beautiful and loving images of an all-good, benign and accepting mother as a substitute object for not facing the true loss/trauma of the originary mother object.

In order to construct a philosophy of religion that functions as the second approach defined above, as a form of mourning versus melancholy, I will return to Rosenzweig's emphasis on emptiness. As I've noted earlier, in Part I of the *Star* Rosenzweig describes the Chinese idea of the Tao in terms of "nothingness as the origin of something": "The Tao is this: effecting without acting; it is a god who keeps 'quite as a mouse' so that the world can move around him." Again, Rosenzweig continues:

It is entirely without essence; nothing exists in it in the way that every self, for example 'exists' in the Brahma. Rather it itself exists in everything . . . to use the analogy of the Upanishads, in the way the salt crystals exist in a solution [,] . . . in the way that the hub exists in the spokes, as the window exists in the wall, or the empty space in a vessel. It is that which, by being 'nothing,' makes a something useful, the unmoved mover of the movable. It is the non-act as the basis of act."²⁴

In certain respects this notion of emptiness that Rosenzweig associates with eastern religious traditions and texts reflects the early states of childhood development associated with Freud's "oceanic feeling," the maternal realm, or the semiotic chora, as nothing, but at the same time as everything. Even the early stages of childhood development associated with Freud's oceanic feeling and Plato's chora are fundamental in the development of self. Kristeva, however, correctly identifies the western tradition as associating anything related to the pre-linguistic maternal realm as necessarily evoking a sense of the object. Anything associated with the "mother" must, accordingly, be cut off or otherwise gotten rid of in the formation both of an individual psyche/subject and, at a

²⁴ Rosenzweig, *The Star*, 39.

cultural level, in the formation of society. Rather than treating the pre-ego maternal realm as the originary state of being, Western culture, as I have explored through an evaluation of some of Freud's writings, seems not only to have degraded this primordial time and space to the status of the abject, but also to have erased it, to have lost or forgotten it altogether. What we have thereby lost in western civilization is a presence of the mother, including, in western theology, the divine mother.

From a masculinist perspective, what was thus erased and cut off must also not be allowed any voice or power that might reverse, or even acknowledge and bewail, the erasure and amputation. Hence when the female speaks, as subject, she produces a feeling of Freud's uncanny, that odd feeling of dis-ease that comes over one when, as Freud noted in a famous passage from his piece on the "Uncanny," something one thinks is dead speaks, when "something repressed . . . recurs."²⁵ Inherent in this perspective is the notion that we have lost, in Western civilization, a sense of the beginning before the 'Beginning,' a pre-beginning associated with the maternal realm--what, in Lacan's formulation, is before or beyond the Phallus, taken as the structuring principle of the symbolic order or language.

My earlier reference to the Greek myth "Medusa's Head" can now be used to address some aspect of the inability to face the "feminine" as loss in western culture. Again, in his analysis of the Greek myth, Freud notes the difficulty in looking at Medusa's Head face-to-face.²⁶ Due to what Freud identifies as the castration complex, he theorizes that one cannot face the lack in the image of Medusa, the threat of the loss of

²⁵ Freud, *Uncanny*, 241.

²⁶ See Sigmund Freud, "Medusa's Head," in *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love* (New York: Collier Books, 1974).

male power/divinity represented as the phallus. According to Freud, therefore, there is something terrifying about facing the lack.²⁷

Freud clearly articulated such archetypal imagery in the Greek myth in terms that evoked horror. Hélène Cixous plays on Freud's influential short reflection on the Greek myth of Medusa. In her "Laugh of the Medusa," Cixous does not simply describe another mother substitute to fill in for the silenced voice; instead when her Medusa laughs, she overflows with a type of feminist articulation of "woman as speaking subject" as *écriture féminine*, as *jouissance*.²⁸ There arises the need for a feminist theology as embodying a *laughing medusa* in making a positive and transformative movement into the future, one that truly breaks free of the "status-quo" and points in the direction of not just approaching the pathway toward divinity, but actually entering into the kingdom.

Certainly notions of the feminine divine related to the maternal realm of the chora, in addition to Kristeva's notions of semiotics, join well with Cixous's "Laugh of the Medusa" in articulating a way of reclaiming the lost feminine, but a way that functions not through the introduction of some mother substitute, like the doll/toy in the "*fort/da*" game in Freud. Instead, it represents a chance to mourn the loss of the mother, and provides an opportunity for healing from the loss. Here arises an aspect of a human

²⁷ As noted earlier in this chapter, Freud uses what Diane Jonte-Pace would call his master-thesis, the oedipal complex, in his analysis of Medusa's Head, Jonte-Pace's suggestion of a "counter-thesis" may be more useful in interpreting the myth, that of associating death not with the father, but with the mother. As I have suggested, it may be that Medusa's Head, as an archetypal western paradigm, exhibits not love for the mother and death of the Father as Freud would assert, therefore, but loss of the mother. See Diane Jonte-Pace, Diane Jonte-Pace, "At Home in the Uncanny: Freudian Representations of Death, Mothers, and the Afterlife." *Journal of American Academy of Religion* 64, no. 1 (1996).

²⁸ Helene Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," in *French Feminist Reader*, ed. Kelly Oliver (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 257-275.

search for divinity that is not reduced to a nostalgia for a lost feminine/feminist utopia. Instead it involves an opportunity for women to find empowerment and autonomy. In the spirit of the model Irigaray sets forth in her idea of women “becoming divine,” women realize their inherent worth and dignity.

In order to seek a better understanding, or perhaps the “essential” nature of the feminine divine in the manner Freud was seeking the “essential” nature of being Jewish in his *Moses and Monotheism*, Kristeva turns to a text from the western canon, namely, Plato’s *Timaeus*. In her analysis of that text, Kristeva is able to draw out “earlier stages in ego development” of the western psyche, and not allow the masculinist master-thesis of the Oedipal paradigm to oust it “from a place in the foreground.” Kristeva identifies the early states of childhood development associated with the material realm, the Platonic chora, as fundamental in the development of self. She then begins to articulate the Real accordingly, providing a reference from western philosophy to the feminine divine in Plato’s chora. I associate the chora with a “space” out of which everything arises. It is as such the foundation or “rock” of being. It is also, as Plato noted, and as Freud also asserted, wrapped in obscurity.

The closest Freud comes to openly and directly discussing the obscure time before the ego develops, or the womb-like origin of existence, is through his notion of the uncanny. In elaborating on the uncanny he associated with female genitalia, or Medusa’s Head, Freud quite eloquently and openly describes the manner by which something that at one time was quite familiar, or *heimlich*, becomes strange, or *unheimlich*. He describes the discomfiting tension that arises when what was once quite familiar becomes “othered” through a process of repression. Even as such, rather than leaving it in

obscurity as Freud did during the time he wrote *Civilizations and its Discontents*, or addressing it in a more analytical fashion as he did on his commentary on Medusa's head, Kristeva turns to face it.

Referring to Plato's *Timaeus*, Kristeva utilizes Plato's treatment of the chora in describing it as a receptacle of becoming. There is a notion here of space, not viewed as empty in any negative sense, but instead as teeming with wild energy. The chora, as Plato developed, and as Kristeva further expands upon, thus proves useful in articulating the return of the divine mother as laughing medusa, rather than as a mere mother substitute.

Freud's penchant for viewing psychoanalytic theory as a science in fact can be read as a symptom of his inability to delve into the realm of what Kristeva would associate with the maternal realm. That realm, like the semiotic, is not associated with written language, but with poetic/image-laden language. Furthermore, Kristeva's notions of the symbolic and the semiotic may be particularly significant for interpreting Freud's reference to Egyptian "pictorial" writing as being more primitive than alphabetical writing.

Freud refers to the possibility that the Hebrew scribes were the first to create a written alphabet. According to a type of Freudian recapitulation, the early scribes functioned as the name of the father or law of the father, initiating language in written form in order to provide entryway into the realm of the symbolic. Freud refers to the suggestion "that early Israelites, the scribes of Moses, had a hand in the invention of the first alphabet," he then comments: "If [the Hebrew scribes] were bound by the prohibition against making images they had even a motive for forsaking the hieroglyphic

picture writing when they adapted their written signs for the expression of a new language.”²⁹ Freud’s commentary supports an argument for the scientifically questionable notion of recapitulation, assigning historical time periods to the stages in the development of an individual psyche. In such a comparison, the Egyptians would be associated with the material realm. Their means of communication would thereby necessarily involve a less sophisticated pictorial-laden language. This is a language Kristeva redeems, however, from the realm of the abject in her semiotic she associates with the maternal realm.

Maria Margaroni indicates that for Kristeva, the chora’s function “is to displace the speaking subject, retracing its emergence not only ‘before’ logos but also, in returning it to the maternal body, beyond the Phallus as the structuring principle of the symbolic order.”³⁰ In considering such a move, one may critique Kristeva’s use of the chora, interpreting it as just another attempt to find a replacement for the lost mother. Margaroni counters that argument by first acknowledging that for Kristeva the chora may offer some “utopian promise . . . [as] an escape from logos, culture, and history,”³¹ but still the promise does not identify an object to serve as any mother substitute. Rather, Margaroni argues, “it resists any theoretical reification – even as a fugitive pre-originary origin. The chora is in fact as Freud asserts, the oceanic felling; it is not something to

²⁹ Freud, *Moses*, 69.

³⁰ Maria Margaroni, “ ‘The Lost Foundation’: Kristeva’s Semiotic Chora and Its Ambiguous Legacy.” *Hypatia* 20, no.1 (Winter 2005): 79.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 84.

recover or remember; it cannot, therefore be reduced to what some critics call the ‘quasi mystical realm’.”³²

Margaroni brings up a narrative point in the *Timaeus* that addresses the notion of chora as “space” in relation to Freud’s assertion that “the same space cannot have two different contents,” a point representative of western thinking for both the Greeks and the Hebrews, as well as in terms of Freud’s questionable notion of the “evolution” through recapitulation from the Egyptians to the Greeks and Hebrews. Addressing a “narrative that Critias shares . . . in the opening of the dialogue,” Margaroni writes: “Critias tells us of how the archaic history of Athens came to the Greeks through Salon’s encounter with an Egyptian priest. Critias recalls the priest’s reprimand to the Greeks for ‘remaining children’ in their tendency to erase what has preceded them, the very scene of their production. It is precisely this forgetting, it seems, that has allowed the Greeks to posit themselves at the site of logos.”³³

Margaroni likewise situates Kristeva’s reference to and use of the chora temporally, as “the beginning before ‘the Beginning,’ the mobile origin ‘before the imposition of ‘the Word’,” as it correlates also with Slavoj Žižek reference to the “the beginning of beginnings.” In my estimation, viewing the chora in temporal terms would not offer anything beyond a continuance of a type of nostalgia for a utopian past in the spirit of Freud’s fort/da game. Conceiving the lost feminine divine in such a manner does not, in other words, help first to face the erasure in order to then mourn and find healing for the

³² Ibid., 79.

³³ Ibid., 83.

loss. Further, I suggest that this type of nostalgia encourages just the sort of “return to the origins” that post-modern continental thought disparages.

To further elaborate upon chora in terms of an *ontologically* prior state, rather than a *chronologically* prior state, stressing the significance of the chora as indicating a state or space inherent in each and every moment of existence rather than in some lost utopian “oneness” one may find the need to reclaim in the present, Plato attunes his description of chora as receptacle and as space. The word space implies nothingness. Likewise, Margaroni makes a similar point concerning the chora; this is a point that is reminiscent of Rosenzweig’s reference to eastern religious and philosophical traditions. She asserts the chora addresses “the means for what, in the context of the Western logocentric tradition, has repeatedly been given the status of nothing.” She continues: “The task of psychoanalysis, according to [Kristeva], is to return to this nothing, exposing it as the ‘underlying’ but forgotten ‘causality’ of language and the subject.”³⁴

This nothing, or that which has been erased through being identified with nothing, is in fact not nothing in any purely negative sense, but is, rather, filled with fecundity and possibility, at least if it can be liberated from its abjection and erasure. Although some may claim that the chora, even in Kristeva’s use of it, is always contained within language, or the symbolic, clearly one must acknowledge that the subject was not created *ex nihilo*, or rather, created “out of” (i.e., coming forth “from”), precisely, “nothing” – only now understood as the plentitude of the chora, rather than the merely negative absence. The subject was, in other words, formulated out of a womb, or that from which the symbolic order arises. Although Kristeva utilized Plato’s *Timaeus*, in her attempt to

³⁴ Ibid., 81.

go back “before” the beginning, to seek an origin, the task to pursue in relation to our present concerns is to fully flesh out a feminine divine applicable and appropriate for living fully and freely in the present.

Recognition of the Never Really Lost Mother

And why not interpret one face of the Other, the god face, as based on feminine jouissance?

Jacques Lacan, Book XX

One thing that is certain within this process of articulating a feminine divine is that the depth and profundity of these teachings not only need not, but by necessity cannot, function as a prototype for seeking a feminine divinity by attempting to piece together a feminine divine figure to fill in for the void left from her death. Such an approach to feminine divine would function in a manner not dissimilar to that of second wave feminists involved with the Goddess movement. The feminine divine would then be envisioned and set forth, even given some quasi-historical utopian matriarchal past that is created, idealized and romanticized, turning a Heavenly Mother into an object of adoration.

For, it appears to be human nature, when given a particular explicit object to venerate, to lean toward idolatry in mistaking the object for the real cause for veneration, or to confuse a belief for an object.³⁵ It may be, rather, in the very structure of the traumatic experience – such as the loss (or what is perceived at the level of the unconscious as the loss) of the mother/womb, that idolatry itself emerges, out of the

³⁵ This process of reification functions as an example of Alfred North Whitehead’s fallacy of misplaced concreteness, or as the Lankavatara Sutra of Mahayana Buddhism indicates, as a tendency for those who are not able to go beyond words or theories to mistake their fingertip for what they are pointing at. See *Lankavatara Sutra*, trans. by D. T. Suzuki (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1932), 196.

avoidance of the need to face the loss. This point is not to denigrate the worship of a God as Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ as his son as they are depicted in image and art, it is only to note that given the historical circumstances concerning religion and gender identity in the West, the feminine divine may indeed need to come forth in a different manner. *Not* coming up with a new object to worship opens the way for women as well as men of faith to fully contemplate the feminine divine's nature, who she is, and how one may come to know her,

I suggest that an approach to the female divine should follow the model of *becoming* divine rather than that of *a becoming* divine; for, the latter involves using some *idea* of who she is to fill in for actually embodying her. As men have had the more outward role model of a male divinity to emulate, an exploration of the feminine divine in Rosenzweig's and Nietzsche's writings suggest women may find a place of power in embodying the divine, in declaring that what seemed to be lost in our culture has in fact always been completely present: the feminine divine.

These insights suggest a radical re-visioning of a feminine divine in Western philosophy and theology, as well as a transvaluation of reality. Luce Irigaray develops such a re-vision in utilizing imagery from Plato's allegory of the cave. In a transvaluation of this allegory Irigaray points out that the cave is the womb from which all things are born and should not be left behind in the search for the real/ideal form. She offers not just a reversal still stuck in dualisms such as nature/culture, matter/spirit, feminine/masculine, Goddess/God, however, but instead a true transformative reversal. Irigaray provides an account of life before the mighty reversal in the following passage:

. . . the story goes, . . . men . . . are living in one, same, place. A place shaped like a cave or a womb.

*Turned Upside-down and Back-to-front.*³⁶

Firmly established within the western philosophical trajectory, Irigaray utilizes imagery related to pregnancy in her attempt to formulate an approach to a feminine divine. Hers is a transvaluation of western metaphysics. Just as within the birthing process the infant upon leaving the womb/cave need necessarily go through a “mighty reversal,” exiting the womb/cave, “turned upside-down, back-to-front” as it enters into the world outside.

In acknowledging the cave as origin or home, Irigaray suggests birth not just as a reversal, as in a dialectical antithesis of an earlier thesis in Nietzsche’s notion of *ressentiment*, thus continuing to support the status quo of the “philosophy of the same.” She instead provides a true break from the philosophy of the same and as with a camera obscura in chiasmic reversal she fulfils Rosenzweig’s call to pass through the threshold of love into life. Such a chiasmic reversal involves a reversal not as the flip side of what is present, continuing a type of dualism that sustains the status quo; it is instead flipped over, and *turned around*. As a child moving from the Real to the world outside, Irigaray points toward a re-birth in acknowledging the cave as Real, and the world outside as the false illusion, a world of truth Nietzsche would identify as “illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are.”³⁷ She is more akin to functioning as philosopher not so much “as man,” in the manner Rosenzweig first praised Nietzsche, but as mother, or

³⁶ Luce Irigaray, *The Speculum of the Other Woman* (Ithaca, NY: Ithaca UP, 1974), 244.

³⁷ Nietzsche, *On Truth and Lies*, 47.

rather-- hearkening back to the “origin” of Western philosophy--to Socrates in his role of philosopher as mid-wife.

In many respects emphasizing the notion of a feminist philosophy of religion as it functions within the history of western philosophy indicates a type of “return of the Mother.” The stylistic rendering of this particular historical and philosophical trajectory includes insights from Rosenzweig concerning revelation and insights from Nietzsche concerning overcoming; for, the returning to the origin or facing what qualifies as the maternal realm as feminine divine may offer Western philosophical discourse a repetition of the same, but now in a wholly different manner. It functions not through nostalgia for a lost home. It rather involves recognition of what was always present, recognition of fecund possibilities within the emptiness of space always accessible to everyone in any given moment.

Accordingly, to paraphrase a line from T. S. Eliot, it represents the sort of “returning home” after a long journey, only now to become cognizant of, or to know it, for the first time. Where Rosenzweig calls for a transvaluation of Western metaphysics in the emergence of the philosopher as man, it is not until Luce Irigaray that one may find a philosopher as woman, flipping western metaphysics on its head, newly naming what had become abject, dead, forgotten--the maternal womb as Plato’s allegorical cave--as, in fact, the empty origin of being, filled with potentiality, power, creativity, and life. It is the emptiness, then, not of death, but of life – as she extols it through her transvaluation.

In summary, perhaps the very potent, powerful, fecund, realization of the maternal realm no longer as abject but as divine origin may provide an opening toward cultivating

a contemplative awareness of a feminine principle never before developed in the West. Again, the attempt to recover the lost feminine divine may find its way “home” not in seeking Goddess imagery as a new role model to live by. For, this would provide another model for *a becoming* divine. Instead, through having a face-to-face encounter with emptiness as the ultimate truth, a sublime woman may become divine, “mourn” the loss of the mother without continuing the compulsive search for some mother substitute, and then speak from the very place of emptiness as it relates to the feminine principle. The mourning of the loss of the (old) mother suddenly shows itself to be the very gate through which one can at last move “into life,” as Rosenzweig writes. The loss of the “the mother” at this point shows itself to be, in reality “the gateway” of the feminine divine.

For the divine woman to laugh, for a woman to adhere to her own sense of energy without falling back into the masculinist zero-sum formulation of libidinal economy, and without being excluded from academic discourse as a result, there must be a transvaluation of Western metaphysics that goes beyond--or rather slides underneath--contemporary continental post-modern thought. One way to approach a revolutionary transvaluation is to recognize the pre-Oedipal as more closely related to the origin of life, that what appeared to be “nothing” is actually the origin of everything. Peter Davis interprets Andreas-Salomé as suggesting just such an approach to a feminine divine: “Andreas-Salomé’s view of the core of femininity [is] as stable, rooted, undifferentiated and originary, or . . . essentially ungraspable, but which lies at the origins of all life.”³⁸

³⁸ Peter Davies, *Myth, Matriarchy and Modernity: Johann Jacob Bachofen in German Culture. 1860-1945* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010) 225.

This recognition of emptiness as truth, although perhaps quite difficult for a Western mind to contemplate, offers one avenue for approaching the great Mother, or the vast womb out of which everything arises. A westerner may experience this emptiness, not as a vast womb of potentiality, but as a wholly negative nothingness. Likewise the “maternal realm,” or Freud’s reference to the Oceanic Feeling, both relating to the period of time when a child is at one with the mother and has not yet developed a separate sense of self, may also be experienced as negative nothingness, and as a corollary, abject, lost, forgotten, or dead. However reflections on the feminine principle may lead to the insight that what seems to be nothingness is in fact a potent and powerful primordial vast fecundity of possibility. As everything exists in it, it is always present in all being.

Chapter Five:

Unveiling the Feminine Divine: Andreas-Salomé - Mother of Psychoanalysis

I repeat my argument that Nietzsche captures the notion of a transfiguration through his philosophical narrative of one able to overcome: Zarathustra as *Übermensch*. As I suggested, reading Rosenzweig against Nietzsche, and defending Nietzsche against Rosenzweig's critique, brings forth a type of feminine divine. This leads as well to a type of philosophically historical "overcoming" of the past as it functions as a fundamental aspect of Rosenzweig's and Nietzsche's writings in general. There still may arise, however, as I've previously noted, a more fully fleshed out notion of the feminine divine that does not remain in the written page alone, but that can only be embodied. Just as I suggest the "face behind the face" of Rosenzweig's *Star*, the feminine divine, shines behind the façade only in "facing" the loss of the Mother god, I also assert that the "face behind the face" in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* is an actual, embodied woman: Lou Andreas-Salomé. In this chapter I will offer some remarks on how Lou Andreas-Salomé's thinking relates to some of Rosenzweig's veiled references to a feminine divine, as well as to how her thinking relates to Nietzsche's writings concern a feminine divine as well. I then make clear the importance of acknowledging her in the eventual coming forth of the sort of feminist philosophy of religion I am working toward.

There is a tantalizing mirroring relation between the texts I have been working with in this dissertation and Nietzsche's own personal interactions with Andreas-Salomé. The confluence concerns the manner in which Andreas-Salomé in many respects was not Nietzsche's disciple, but was actually responsible for some of the key motivation for

Nietzsche to accept the eternal recurrence of the same in terms that I identify with the feminine divine.

Where French Feminist thought in many respects follows from Nietzsche, Freud and Lacan, there is also, I suggest, a manner in which Andreas-Salomé views primary narcissism that resonates with Kristeva's reference to the Platoic chora. Both Irigaray and Kristeva value the chora-like, maternal realm. They both also validate what Freud treats as primary narcissism as a fundamental and essential stage in the growth in an individual's psyche from a sense of oneness toward a sense of self.¹

Andreas-Salomé stands in contrast to Freud, however, concerning narcissism in one striking manner. She was, after all, as Lisa Appignanesi and John Forrester describe, "the great understander of Freud and of Freudian metapsychology." Psychoanalysis became, as Appignanesi and Forrester, state: "Lou's baby."² Appignanesi and Forrester further note that "it would be appropriate to see Lou as the mother of psychoanalysis." A need becomes clear, then, to place Andreas-Salomé squarely in the prominent yet generally over-looked role as: ". . . the good mother whose life-loving optimism imbues all her writings, which appropriately focus on female sexuality, on love and on questions

¹ For perspectives on how Lou Andreas-Salomé functioned at the crux or confluence of writers such as Nietzsche, Freud, and French Feminist Philosophers, see Julia Borossa and Caroline Rooney, "Suffering Transience and Immortal Longings: Salome Between Nietzsche and Freud," *Journal of European Studies* 33, no. 3-4 (Dec 2003): 287-305; Caroline Rooney, "Reservations . . . Concerning Libido Theory and the Afterlife of Psychoanalysis," *Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 9, no. 1 (April 2004); Lorraine Markotic, "There Where Primary Narcissism Was, I Must Become: The Inception of the Ego in Andreas-Salome, Lacan, and Kristeva," *American Imago* 58, no. 4 (2001): 813-36.

² Lisa Appignanesi and John Forrester, *Freud's Women* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992), p 257.

of narcissism and sexual difference.” Appignanesi and Forrester situate her as the “mother . . . whose roots . . . lie in turn-of-the-century romantic *Lebensphilosophie*, that peculiarly German hankering after that oceanic spirituality, that sense of wholeness, which Freud had rejected and which Lou never altogether leaves behind.”³

Furthermore, Andreas-Salomé wrote, in one of the few articles she composed on psychoanalysis that has so far been translated into English, of the double/dual aspect of narcissism. She stands face to face with Freud regarding the notion of narcissism. Art critic and philosopher Victor Mazin notes, concerning Andreas-Salome’s position on narcissism in relation to Freud:

If for Freud, narcissism, as a formation of one’s own self-image, created the conditions for self-identification, for the birth of the subject, then for Salomé, narcissism presupposed not collecting oneself but rather dissolving oneself into the surroundings, self-dissemination close to de-personalization, denial of the boundaries of one’s image.⁴

I suggest that Andreas-Salomé is able to explore in her notion of the “dual orientation of narcissism” the notion of an overcoming of self as a transfiguration akin to the movement Nietzsche and Rosenzweig, as well as perhaps Goethe before them, made. This is a transfiguration based on acknowledging the dual energies of eros and thanatos, as it is also like the “moment” marked at the crossing points in a transvaluation of the cognition of the All that Rosenzweig attempts to depict in a passage from Part II of the *Star*: “That which had struggled to the surface out of God’s ‘Nought’ as self-negation of this Nought re-emerged from its immersion to God’s living ‘Aught,’ not any longer as self-negation, but rather as world-affirmation.”

³ Ibid., 241-42.

⁴ Victor Mazin, “The Femme Fatale – Lou Andreas-Salomé,” *Journal of European Psychoanalysis* 14 (Winter-Spring 2004): 1.

Rosenzweig's description of what appears to be "nothing" as the "Nought," is, as I've pointed out, an idea of "nothingness" that is actually filled with possibility. He continues: "God's vitality thus became to a certain extent again a Nought," but this Rosenzweig describes as "a Nought on a higher level, Nought only with reference to that which emerged from it but in its own right a ought full of character, in short no Nought but an Aught." Rosenzweig continues with this discourse, seeming to recognize a certain sense of dual tension within the realm of being and non-being, of unity and disintegration, of going under to go over, of eros and thanatos, especially as he comes to write of the notion of a conversion experience:

If one wanted to regard God's vitality as such a background say, of the manifest creative power it would justifiably have to be countered that this emergence could not have taken place out of the mythical vitality of the concealed God, but only out of its conversion into the revealed.⁵

Rosenzweig plays with a structure, setting up references to a revealed God, and a concealed God that in some respects resemble my references to a recognition of the womb-like "maternal realm" in a feminist metaphysics as the "flip side of life." For, as Rosenzweig indicates, it is only out of the Nought, that the Aught arises. Rosenzweig describes such a structure as he depicts in his language/thought, in terms that fail to provide a definitive meaning – it is, as the saying goes, a "problem that has no name." Rosenzweig writes as much: "This conversion, however lacks a name; it is no more than, as it were, the geometric point out of which the emergence takes place." This "lacking" is actually no "lack" at all, but rather an inexhaustible fullness.

⁵ Rosenzweig, *Star*, 157.

This place is as the point--or moment, in temporal terms--of a crossing over, as Nietzsche describes it in Part II of *Zarathustra*, just before his depiction of an overcoming of human tendencies toward becoming superhuman, or the *Übermensch*. For Nietzsche too describes this overcoming in terms of place, a crossing point, which Nietzsche refers to as a gateway, one “that has two faces” where “two paths meet,” two paths that “contradict each other . . . offend each other face to face.” It is, Zarathustra says, “[h]ere at the gateway that they come together.”

Whatever transformative conversion experience Rosenzweig and Nietzsche depict, Rosenzweig in theological discourse and Nietzsche in narration, seems dependent on the meeting of a dual nature, whether that be referring to directions in time such as forward/backward, embodied genders such as male/female, motivations toward life such as eros or thanatos, or aspects of existence such as divine/human. I associate such a dual aspect of existence with the need to recognize the reality of both light and dark. I emphasize this as I associate it with Goethe’s culturally contextual (even if not consciously direct) influence on Nietzsche, Rosenzweig, and Freud for that matter, in acknowledging the importance of seeing/recognizing what Goethe referred to as the “realm of the mothers,” what Nietzsche’s referred to as the Dionysian, what Freud referred to as the oceanic feeling--or what he also, perhaps, in his final iteration of the death drive in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, recognizes as a tendency toward not so much annihilation as disintegration.⁶ The death drive as such involves not a violent

⁶ Andreas-Salomé also addresses the death drive as akin to the notion of disintegration in her later work as a psychoanalyst. See Andreas-Salomé, “Dual orientation of Narcissism,” *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 31 (1962): 1-30. It may also be important to

killing, but instead a quiet process of disintegration, as it manifests itself as a breakthrough into an entirely new sort of “integration.”

Even as I attempted to bring out Kristeva’s emphasis on the maternal realm no longer as abject, but as fundamental to human experience, and to be associated with the maternal realm, I suggested that a recognition of this fact could play a role in addressing not only an individual’s sense of lack or longing—the melancholy of a vague knowing that something seems to be missing--but also, as a variation on a cultural recapitulation of the Freudian theory of ontology recapitulating phylogeny, a collective experience of a people/nation who may be experiencing a longing for mother, for “mother-land,” as a “problem that has no name,” in Betty Friedan’s famous phrase.⁷

One thing is certain: Andreas-Salomé indicated in her essay “The Dual Orientation of Narcissism” a recognition, in relation to narcissism, of the significance of sitting with the tension, or, as another of Andreas-Salome’s protégées, Rilke, more famously wrote, to “[l]ive the question now.” Such ambiguity assumes the ability to sit with the tension between “desire for individuality and the contrary movement toward conjugation and fusion.”⁸ Andreas-Salomé marks the movements as happening concurrently; there is not a sense of either/or in her approach.

She describes the dualism in terms that hark back to a state of non-dualism. She demonstrates a way that the oceanic feeling as chora remains, just as I assert through a

note that Freud was in close correspondence with Andreas-Salome while writing *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.

⁷ A recognition of a melancholy for a lost homeland resonates with land issues throughout the world today, perhaps most especially in a location that seems to exhibit implications that could lead to a most devastating conclusion, that is the conflict between Israel and Palestine as each continues to fight for their own purported “homeland.”

⁸ Andreas-Salome, *Dual Orientation*, 4.

form of recapitulation that the feminine divine remains in a collective society/culture, even as the development of the ego as a separate sense of self appears to joust it from its moorings as grounding of being. Andreas-Salomé writes of this tension/dualism in the following manner:

In this dual orientation of narcissism the relations of the libido would be expressed in our being rooted in our original state; we remain embedded in it, for all our development as plants remain in the earth, despite their contrary growth toward the light. Even the physical processes of sex and procreation are bound to units which remain undifferentiated, and the erogenous zones are the residues of an infantile state from which the bodily organs have long since been separated in the service of self-preservation.⁹

Stating the “dual” nature of narcissism not only acknowledges narcissism in a revised, more positive light than Freud had considered, but it also acknowledges a dual aspect of life – one reflected, following Feuerbach, in the God/s that humans create. Such God/s must then, necessarily include both the masculine and feminine, both a father and mother.

Perhaps another obscure, forgotten rhizome-like linkage of Andreas-Salomé, this time through Rosenzweig, is with his close colleague Martin Buber, who had a strong appreciation of Andreas-Salomé.¹⁰ At Buber’s request Andreas-Salomé wrote an essay called “Eroticism,” where, as Bianca Theisen writes in her essay “Spacing the Feminine,” Andreas-Salomé “argued . . . that the male and the female are opposed only on a surface level, while at a deeper level these apparent oppositions in fact cross over into each other and meet.”

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ See Nahum Glatzer *The Letters of Martin Buber: A Life of Dialogue* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996) and Maurice Friedman, *Martin Buber’s Life and Work* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1988), 172.

In the essay, Andreas-Salomé explores a certain structure in a type of move toward a non-duality between male and female, or at least as a means to transcend gender altogether through the “crossing over” she writes of as a literary structure in the phrase “duality as unity and unity as duality.”¹¹ Accordingly, coinciding with the theme of my approach to the feminine divine in terms of choric space, and linking Andreas-Salomé with Kristeva as well, Theisen quotes Kristeva in “suggest[ing] that feminist theory depart from the ‘dichotomy man/woman as an opposition [...] belonging to metaphysics.’” Furthermore, Theisen attempts to argue for a “space of the feminine [. . .] delineated topologically as an empty space that can be occupied by either male or female.”¹²

Andreas-Salomé is able, as it turns out, to conceive of the All of the philosophers of German Idealism in terms that Nietzsche and Rosenzweig tried to articulate. She writes as much in her essay “The Dual Orientation of Narcissism” in recounting a feminist re-envisioning of the Narcissus myth. In this essay she addresses one important aspect of the Narcissist myth that I propose my extrapolation of the feminine divine may address as a more authentic approach to the All than the one Rosenzweig identified in German Idealist philosophy. It works as an approach to the All that deconstructs the “master narrative” in western approaches to nature. It can provide a re-visioning of the western narrative “myth” on nature that, within the framework of a more fully developed

¹¹ Quoted in Bianca Theisen, “Spacing the Feminine,” *MLN* 121.3 (2006): 530.

¹² *Ibid.*, 530-31.

feminist theology, may work in the service of a feminist approach to environmental ethics.¹³

Andreas-Salome writes:

It is somewhat to the discredit of the godfather of our term, Narcissus, hero of the mirror, if its use brings to the fore only the eroticism of self-enjoyment. Bear in mind that the Narcissus of legend gazed, not at a manmade mirror, but at the mirror of Nature. Perhaps it was not just himself that he beheld in the mirror, but also himself as if he were still All: would he not otherwise have fled from the image, instead of lingering before it? And does not melancholy dwell next to enchantment upon his face? Only the poet can make a whole picture of this unity of joy and sorrow, departure from self and absorption in self, devotion and self-assertion.¹⁴

Andreas-Salomé provides an appropriate approach to the All in terms that may make a distinction between the All of philosophical pursuits, and the All of mystical oneness with/as divine, through the poet as midwife in bringing a sense of new integration. This All as Nature is the mirror that Narcissus sees face to face; a nature associated with an originary oneness through the dual nature of “joy and sorrow, departure from self and absorption in self, devotion and self-assertion.” One may utilize her view in an approach to nature, that is not like the womb/maternal realm as abject, lifeless, “invisible,” etc., but instead as the home we came from, and will return to. Perhaps Andreas-Salomé may be the face behind the face; the mother figure who in a myriad of potential influences may show her face in the history of western philosophy of religion, and as a fore-runner for a final recognition of woman and man becoming divine.

¹³ Andreas-Salomé presents an alternative approach to nature that has some resonance with the maternal realm or chora. In her attempts to redeem Narcissism from its abject status, she names both nature and the maternal realm in renewed terms.

¹⁴ Andreas-Salomé, *Dual Orientation*, 8-9.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

On The Feminine Divine: Longing for Maternal Realm/Home as the *Problem That Has No Name*

In order to find some measure of closure in the form of concluding remarks concerning my reading of Rosenzweig's and Nietzsche's texts, and the direction I take them toward exploring a philosophy of religion that includes an authentic approach to a feminine divine, I reiterate the importance of acknowledging Rosenzweig and Nietzsche as they function as harbingers for a re-evaluation of the aim of philosophical discourse in general. I have tried to show that both thinkers have altered the historical trajectory from "Iona to Jena" in ways that question the "master narrative" in which western philosophy has unfolded.

I presented the possibility of viewing their work as marking a shift in the history of philosophy, not only as that shift is generally accepted, in the way of taking them whereby they continue to influence postmodern thought, but also insofar as their writings include many implicit as well as explicit references to a feminine divine. I have shown how the impact of their work can lead to a reassessment of the role that philosophy plays in academics, as well as, at least potentially, in society.

I formulated my argument by beginning with an evaluation of Rosenzweig's writings, as they appeared to dismiss Nietzsche for not fully "facing" the revelation of love, and also for lacking a *will to faith* in a transcendent male monotheistic God. Against such a dismissal, however, I have shown how Nietzsche can be read to open an

approach to a type of divinity more to be associated with the feminine divine. I have offered a reading of *Zarathustra*, especially, that depicts Nietzsche as elaborating a Faustian-like need to “descend in order to ascend,” emblematic of the move towards a transvaluation of masculinist values.

This reading suggests Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra* functions not as philosopher or theologian, but as “mid-wife” for the “higher men” able to enact a type of transformation through reading the text. Against Rosenzweig’s claim that Nietzsche falls short of being able not just to write about such a transition, but also to embody it, I argued that Nietzsche does in fact depict his creation *Zarathustra*, if not himself, as one able to cross the threshold of love into life. I suggested that it was actually Rosenzweig who was not able fully to grasp the aspects of what I refer to as a feminine divine because he continued to hold to conventional notions of God in terms of revelation.

I explored the manner in which Lou Andreas-Salomé, in her interaction with Nietzsche, and perhaps as she influenced his thinking and life, provided insights that not only directly influenced Freud, but also, in perhaps a more indirect manner, influenced, through Freud and Lacan, some French Feminist theorists. I referred to these theorists in attempting to bring forth a feminist philosophy of religion that in a very fundamental way suggests a radical transvaluation of contemporary Western philosophical discourse.

I identified the ways that Rosenzweig and Nietzsche may be used to make a contribution, therefore, in the coming forth of a more fully defined feminist philosophy of religion. As noted, such a philosophy of religion would have to be one that included and emphasized not so much just a discourse on what impact the existence of a feminine divine may have on philosophical as well as psychological, social, even political

endeavors in contemporary Western thought and society, but also what the experience of a feminine divine itself may entail. This I presented an acknowledgment of the “maternal realm” as a fundamental “beginning” not only in our “historical lives,” but also of every moment in human experience.

Furthermore, I have identified and highlighted a recognition of the maternal realm in chronological, ontological, and in some respects (as I have indicated with Freud and Nietzsche), even in *geographical* terms. I’ve shown how Freud and Nietzsche appeared haunted by the significance of a pre-history in what I associate with the maternal realm, and as a geographical location, specifically Egypt. The notion of focusing on such originary “beginnings” may also be associated with the beginnings, not only of an individual’s biological life, but also in terms of her ontological being, that is in how, in each and every moment, thoughts, perceptions, and actions/behavior come forth.

This ontological beginning arises out of an “emptiness” that is not, as I’ve explored, void of all life, but is instead inexhaustibly full with fecund potential. Such a fecundity has become abject in western thought/life; it has become void. Societal, cultural, theological, and religious “conditioning” seems to have functioned to conflate being full with possibility with being empty of any quality at all. It, along with the whole maternal realm associated with it, has become abject, invisible, not there. We have no words in fact to describe it, as it has no “name” in conventional language. I can depict it only as a longing, a longing that finally shows itself to be a longing for a home one never really left in the first place – a womb which one gets back to at last, rather than, as had only seemed to be the case all along, out of which one has long ago been cast. It

resembles a “fall” as “becoming divine” from which arises the recognition that one never fell in the first place.

In sum, through a feminist approach to Rosenzweig’s *Star* and Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra*, I offer a foundation for a feminist philosophy of religion that includes the feminine divine. I demonstrate the importance of my research in helping to develop and utilize a type of feminist philosophy based on what Jantzen refers to as birth, procreation, and life rather than on the necrophilia or love of death associated with the masculinist philosophical tradition.¹ Although I begin my analysis with Rosenzweig’s and Nietzsche’s work, through my particular methodological approach using the work of French feminists and Lou Andreas-Salomé I provide a feminist voice or perspective that is not a corollary to, an alternative reading of, nor any other form subject to being co-opted by a “masculinist” approach. This work, therefore, has far reaching implications for the broader study of western philosophy of religion, as well as of western thought in general.

Embodying the Feminine Divine: Inter-Religious, Inter-Cultural, Inter-Political Discourse

Just as I explore the feminine divine as necessarily not in terms of “God in a skirt,” I likewise find that a feminist philosophy of religion based on my assumptions concerning a feminine divine helps to provide a foundation for viewing difference in inter-religious, inter-cultural, and inter-political dialog. This feminist philosophy of religion based upon my approach to a feminine divine would not only tolerate difference,

¹ See Grace Jantzen, *Becoming Divine: Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1999).

but absolutely depend upon it. I argue for an awareness of a non-dual experience, that is, an experience not referring to dualism or monism (nor pluralism for that matter) but instead as I articulate it, as “not two.”

I refer to the concept of “non-duality” in terms of the feminine divine in order to indicate a “trans-dualistic” solution that moves not only beyond dualism, but also beyond monism and pluralism as well. This approach breaks from the circle of arguments between these three purportedly basic positions that have proven themselves to be mostly ineffective in inter-personal communication. To expand the notion of nondualism, I provide a brief formula: to say that x and y (male and female, spirit and matter, good and evil, etc.) are “not-two” is the not the same as saying either that they are “one and the same thing” or that they are “many (‘more than two’) things”; rather, it is to remove the relationship between x and y from the whole context of conceptualization in which such quantitative qualities make sense, placing that relationship “beyond number.” Even as they are beyond the conceptualization of number, at the same time, there is a recognition as essential of the differentiation of x and y from one another that is captured already in the denial of the “identity”—the being one-and-the-same—of x and y, when the language of “not-two” is properly understood.

The term “non-dual” as I identify it here, connects with the need Rosenzweig and Nietzsche demonstrate of breaking the old “idols.” It also provides the foundation for a real feminine divine, in the sense of Lacan’s use of the term “real.” I argue that this feminine divine contrasts with Jantzen’s reference to a feminine god in terms of “God in a skirt”; again, it does not refer to some kind of ambiguously gendered or androgynous “freak” as one split between two genders, or among many gendered alternatives, or

finally, in trying to mix all genders into the one and the same. Concerning using this paradigm in approaching difference, I emphasize the fact that there can be no awareness of nondualism without difference; in fact the path to the feminine divine as non-dual again, I reiterate, depends upon difference. The goal in this is not to erase difference, and transgress/transcend conflict – instead, as Nietzsche so powerfully has shown us, it is to face and sit with and work through agon/struggle.

I refer to a struggle in the process of recognizing the feminine divine, so as to indicate that one may at first feel repelled by the viewing of the uncanny face of the feminine divine. It is my goal to allow my reader to see that her face is not something to fear, but actually one's home. Her face, then, not only loses its power to repel, but it also offers in its place insights into truly seeing that which has remained hidden for so long. As I present this is the case, I also make the association between it and viewing the other in terms that allow for an actual seeing them, not as other, or the same, but face to face.

Even as I explore some implications of how the concept of nonduality in/as the feminine divine provides new insight into identity and difference, helping to provide a way in which to view communications between peoples, if these ideas are to function within the context of real personal, social, cultural and political situations, the participants in dialog need necessarily to open to the insights I've explored in my dissertation. As there is great promise in this, it also would take serious considerations concerning the insights I aim to help my readers obtain.

I present here not a fully defined model for communications, therefore, but instead some theoretical understandings concerning a feminist philosophy of religion or theology arising from the western philosophical tradition that bring to the fore a feminine

face of the divine as it has become abject in western thought and life. I reassert that it is a bringing forth, however, that due to the very nature of it being abject is not necessarily a natural or appealing rendition of *a becoming* divine.

As the face of the feminine divine may for most part be quite unbearable to look at, I approach her through an indirect manner. I promote an awareness that what should strike fear in her subjects is a model for a feminine divine that merely substitutes for the real, not because she is truly “other,” as *in wholly other*, but instead because she has become nothing more than a façade, a shallow replication of a mother substitute of the missing/lost *real* mother. I seek to show that *a becoming* feminine divine is a demonic parody of the real feminine divine I try to help my readers to face.

The feminine divine I present does not move directly, then, but again, only indirectly, through a journey reaching back to a Rosenzweigian reading of Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra*, as they both arose within the context of German culture entrenched with images/references to the eternal feminine in Goethe’s *Faust*. In the real mother as nondual “emptiness” we find at the end of this journey, a recognition of her as the ground of all being, as the womb out of which the world arises. This feminine divine serves, therefore, as an approach to theology and the philosophy of religion that, for the first time I argue, is actually in the service of life. In this way my approach to the feminine divine as I have laid out here in my dissertation in many ways ends up fulfilling Nietzsche’s and Rosenzweig’s call for transformation.

I refer to my move in looping back to Rosenzweig and Nietzsche as following Nietzsche in Heidegger’s assertion of need for simultaneity of all three of Nietzsche’s historical models. In order to be truly “critical” of the present – that is to focus on the

flame of truth as Arendt refers to in Benjamin's text -- we must not continue on in the same pattern of compulsive repetition, always seeking, but never really finding, our lost mother/home. I emphasize the need for a feminist discourse that does not "transcend" gender, dualism, or difference altogether, asking for some odd, impractical overly idealistic utopian vision of universal harmony according to a certain human essence of being (something Rosenzweig so vehemently argued against), but again, only within individuality/difference.

The feminine divine as a non-dual experience shows itself as the divine face that truly cannot be faced and survive, at least not in the sense of maintaining the same approach to the divine, gender, or in fact to all of reality. This face is not so much beautiful, as in a *becoming* Goddess, all benevolent, all good, but instead the sublime, "shatteringly beautiful" face of the real mother; it is that face behind the face of Rosenzweig's divine, that peaks out through the façade/face of the masculinist God. It is also the face that offers a means of transvaluation of traditional metaphysics, as well as masculinist approaches to philosophy and theology.

The Face Behind the Face: The Kiss of Medusa

One of the central presumptions that both Nietzsche and Rosenzweig make upon their readers, is that they need to think concretely in terms of the body and embodiment when attempting to "philosophize with a hammer," as Nietzsche recommends, or engage in the "New Thinking" with Rosenzweig. It is therefore the case that "the feminine divine" is no mere "abstraction," but, rather, always incarnates herself in one form/figure or another. I make the suggestion, therefore, that Rosenzweig's *Star* is itself (including especially as Rosenzweig himself conceived and wrote it) the face in which God

incarnates Himself. In a similar fashion to Nietzsche's "Zarathustra" as the form/figure through which Dionysus announces his own coming as incarnated in Nietzsche's actual works (and in/as Nietzsche himself, if one discerns the sense shining through the non-sense of Nietzsche's "insane" ravings in the letters and cards he sent from Turin after his breakdown in Jan. 1889), just so must and does the feminine divine incarnate herself in/as Andreas-Salomé. It is Andreas-Salomé who "mothers" and gives motherly birth and nurturance to Nietzsche. Furthermore, it is Andreas-Salomé, at least and especially through Nietzsche, who is then able to "redeem" Rosenzweig, who may never have been able, otherwise, to see the very face of the mother who mothered him through Nietzsche.

In relaying this trajectory, of a circling back to Nietzsche, we see the cyclic nature of return, that is in terms of seeking the face behind the face, and after having experienced her, then attempting to depict her not so much as the Medusa's Head, or even in the laugh of the Medusa. I depict her instead, first of all, in acknowledging the mother embodied in human form as Andreas-Salome, but also as the feminine divine, who, although having seemed to have disappeared within the psychological, sociological, and historical West, presents herself in the nondual awareness that has always been present. One may then face the shatteringly beautiful look of Medusa as she turns to us with her motherly and nurturing kiss. This is the kiss/embrace the western psyche longs for, that problem that has no name, it is also the face of one who has always been present, waiting, for her children to return home.

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